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MARRIED BENEATH HIM.

A NOVEL.

BY JAMES PAYN.

AUTHOR OF "LOST SIR MASSINGBERD," "THE CLYFFARDS OF CLYFFE," "AT HER MERCY,"
"FALLEN FORTUNES," "FOUND DEAD," "A PERFECT TREASURE," "CARLYON'S YEAR,"
"GWENDOLINE'S HARVEST," "ONE OF THE FAMILY," "WOMAN'S VENGEANCE,"
"A BEGGAR ON HORSEBACK; OR, A COUNTY FAMILY," "WALTER'S WORD,"
"WON—NOT WOOED," "BRED IN THE BONE," "CECIL TRYST,"
"THE BEST OF HUSBANDS," "MURPHY'S MASTER," ETC.

"Take thus much of my counsel. Marry not
In haste; for he that takes the best of wives,
Puts on a golden fetter; for wives sometimes,
Are like to painted fruit, which promise much,
But still deceive us, when we come to touch them."

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Gift
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MARRIED BENEATH HIM.

BY JAMES PAYN.

AUTHOR OF "LOST SIR MASSINGBERD."

CHAPTER I.

THE ROUND AT CASTERTON.

CASTERTON is a village in a very rural part of England. Our story opens at a spot about a mile from it, high up on the lone and desolate downland, which stretches away, fenceless and limitless, on all sides, like an ocean or a prairie. Like a prairie, too, the earth is covered with flowers, but so minute as not to affect the color of the landscape, which is grass-green everywhere, except where the shining chalk roads slash it with white.

Although it is early this summer morning, and the dew has not left the grass, two boys of about sixteen or so are sitting upon it—at the foot of what seems, and is, a mighty rampart circling away behind them—as though rheumatism was as difficult a thing to catch as hares.

"Willum's late this morning," observed the shorter but more thickly-built of the two lads, whose eyes had been fixed steadily on the village for several minutes.

"I wish you'd say William, Jack, and not Willum," returned the other, laying his hand kindly on his friend's shoulder, as though to avoid the appearance of offence.

"What's the good?" replied the first speaker. "Willum's easiest. Everybody ain't such a deuced clever fellow as you, Fred. Willum's what father calls it, and Willum does for me."

"But your father wanted you to ride Grandsire, which, he said, had done for him very well, and might for you, Jack; but nothing would serve you to go hunting upon that was in the stable, and he must needs buy for you that long-tailed, thin-legged—"

"There's not a better pony in the county," roared Jack Meyrick, angrily. "I'll bet he shows *you* his tail the first time we go into the vale this year, my boy. Thin legs, indeed! why, everybody but a gaby would know that his legs *ought* to be thin."

"I didn't say they oughtn't," quoth the other, laughing. "You know a great deal more about horses than I do, Jack."

"Ay, I believe you; I rather just think I do," was the unmitigated reply. "Why don't Willum come, I wonder? Let us cross the ditch and climb the mound, and then we shall be sure to see him."

"Ditch! mound! Why, my dear Jack, don't you know what happened here?"

"Right well I do, lad. It was in this very place that we picked five-and-twenty pounds of mushrooms in one afternoon last year. Charlotte pickles 'em precious well. I like pickled mushrooms, I do."

"Ay; but I mean what happened here before last year—when every blade of grass was drenched in blood, Jack, and spear and sword cut into the naked flesh of our fathers—"

"I don't believe it," interrupted Meyrick, sturdily. "That's one of the tales you are always making out, and repeating till you believe it yourself. Do you suppose my mother wouldn't have told me if anything like that had happened to the governor? Pooh! And your father a doctor, too? Why, who would ever have fought with *him* on Leckhamsley Round? It's ridiculous!"

"I mean our forefathers, Jack—our ancestors. They crossed this fossé upon the naked bodies of their slain; they had only clubs for the most part, while they, upon the rampart there, were cased in armor, and had swords and spears. They say that thirty thousand Britons perished in this one trench, only a few hundreds in the next, and not one lived to reach the top of the mound. And yet the place is not a hundred and fifty yards away, and was protected by no other defence than we see now. Doesn't that seem strange, Jack?"

"Ay, strange enough," muttered Meyrick, with a sigh, for historical allusion always oppressed him, as partaking of the nature of "lessons," which he held should never be administered to a chap unless when at school, and it was now holiday-time. "But bother all that! I'll bet you threepence that I'll be on the top of the mound before you."

"Done!" exclaimed Frederick, tossing his long, dark hair as an impatient horse his mane. "There are some stones there—on the very spot, perhaps, where the eagles stood; we will see who can touch them first."

"Eagles! Come, I'm not a-going to stomach *that*, Master Galton. I mayn't be a bookworm, but I am not such a dolt as you would make me out. Plovers I've seen, and quails I've seen; but if ever an eagle stood upon Leckhamsley Round— Well, I'm not a-going to argey about it. One, two, three, and *off!*"

In half a minute they were neck and neck, nose and nose, at the stones that marked the summit of the Round, as the old camp was called at Casterton. No wonder that the wily Roman fixed his station there. Four counties could his sentinels descry from it, and all the approaches from the country round. The two concentric circles of fosse and rampart were as plainly visible as though they had been dug yesterday, and must have been garrisoned, all antiquaries agree, by at least a legion. Jack Meyrick must have heard something of this, notwithstanding that he seemed so taken aback by his friend's historical enthusiasm, for the place was the lion of Casterton. Mr. Morrit, the curate, Frederick's uncle, had even written a guide to it, containing such minute information that, if the ancient Britons had but possessed a copy, they might have known where to storm, and made straight for the general's tent without inquiry. After a little discussion as to who had won the race, which could not be settled satisfactorily, "I wonder whether Agricola was ever here?" muttered Frederick, musingly.

"I wonder what has got Willum?" returned the other, impatiently.

"You remember who Agricola was, Jack, don't you?"

"Yes, to be sure I do—he's in that confounded grammar: *agricola*, a husbandman."

"Well, then, I am sure *he* was never here," exclaimed Frederick, surveying the smooth, green flat untouched by ploughshare, with a laugh. Fred was that very rare specimen of boyhood, a humorist—a wit of sixteen years old, and he felt it hard, as an older jester would have done, to have said a good thing without appreciation. Like most humorists, too, he had a sensitive nature, and fearing to have hurt his duller companion's feelings, by laughing at what he did not understand, he explained the witticism. Jack did not see it yet. He explained it the second time, and Jack saw it.

"Ah, I see," quoth he; "and there's Willum coming at last."

It was certainly very unsatisfactory for poor Fred.

William, Squire Meyrick's groom, and chief of the kennel, could now indeed be easily perceived trotting smartly up the long hill from Casterton, upon his master's gray. Why he should visit the Round at that early hour, since the old mare was by no means in want of "exercising," and it was probable that her rider had little taste for the archæological, was not at first sight evident; but presently, between him and the village there appeared Bob, stable-help and master-of-the-dogs, accompanied by a lad still lower in the social scale, and by a long line of greyhounds. The morning was raw and even cold for the season, and each of the dainty creatures wore a sort of Liliputian horsecloth, in which it tripped along like any conscious beauty in her new mantilla. Now, one would pause a moment in such an attitude of expectation as might break a sculptor's heart in the vain attempt to copy it; or strain at the leash which held him, with his lustrous gazelle eyes fixed on the retreating horseman. When the latter had attained the summit of the Round where stood the young gentlemen, he made a signal with his cap, and the clothing was instantly removed from a couple of greyhounds; he blew on a silver whistle, and they were slipped and sped away towards him at such speed as scarcely a bird of the air could emulate. It was a beautiful sight. Their long, fleet legs were so swiftly laid to ground, that to the eye they moved not; they seemed in the distance to skim the turf like swallows; but as the competitors drew nearer, you could see the agile limbs make play, the neck and nose outstretched, but not too low, and all the wondrous work of bone and sinew. Mango and Mangonel! The two boys cheered as though a thousand others beheld the scene in their company, for the beautiful strife of speed stirred their hearts within them. "I'll lay a crown on Mangonel," cried Jack.

"And I on Mango," exclaimed Fred, in haste, lest, ere he could end speech, his dun should win.

But the dun did not win. Coal-black Mangonel first reached the living goal, William—well pleased to see his young master gain his wager—by just three-quarters of a nose. It was a great race.

"The mile," said William, looking at his watch, "was done in just one second less than by the brown bitch Mandragora. You mind her, Master Jack—she has broke her leg a jumping from the cart at Ashdown meeting. We had bad luck all that day."

Then there were more races, for the whole kennel was to be breathed that morning; and upon each the two boys betted, and upon each young Meyrick won, who understood greyhounds better than *jeux d'esprit* and antiquarianism. "Let us bet only half-crowns," said he, after a little, either because he did not wish to take such solid advantage of his superior knowledge, or because he suspected the solvency of his debtor.

"No, no; crowns, crowns, I say!" cried Galton, impatiently, for his blood was up; and since he had already lost more than he could pay, was, as is usual, exceedingly anxious to gamble. But even when he had the choice of dogs, poor Fred always chose the worse, save once; and even then, when the swifter hound was his, and leading by a length, the creature fell, turning head over heels, in accordance, doubtless, with certain laws of motion, but very much in opposition to Master F. Galton's hopes and wishes, and thereby was thrown out and beaten. One pound ten shillings is not a great debt, in the eyes of some young gentlemen; but when one's pocket-money is only half-a-crown a week, and one has laid nothing by, it is unpleasant to owe it. Debts of this kind possess the disagreeable attribute of making you detest your creditor. One would not be sorry, somehow—though, of course, the inhuman sentiment is but transitory—if he should instantly be removed to another and happier sphere, through the dropping of a tortoise upon his head from an eagle's beak, for instance, or other painless and classical mode of sudden extinction. There would then be no necessity for paying such a ridiculously small sum as thirty shillings to his executors or sorrowing relatives. They would, even, in all probability, be distressed at our offering to pay it. In the meantime, however, or in the event of the tortoise-accident not coming off at all, there is the cruel necessity of putting on a cheerful, nay, even a jaunty air, and looking as if, of Charles Fox's two greatest pleasures in this world, that of *losing* was to ourselves the most satisfactory.

Poor Frederick, as he paced homeward beside his late friend and the men and dogs, seemed to himself like a captive in the triumphant procession of his conqueror, Jack. The parallel may actually have presented itself, and a Roman triumph along the Sacred Way have been pictured to his downcast mind, for it was imaginative in the highest degree, and well stored with rich materials; but if it did, it was swept away almost immediately, and the simple mathematical expression of "–30" substituted in its place. The morning growing brighter and warmer momently, the elasticity of the down on which he trod, the graceful beauty of the animals that picked their way so carefully yet rapidly beside him—all those external objects, in short, which, under ordinary circumstances, would not have failed to give pleasure to Frederick Galton's mind, as responsive to all such influences as the Æolian harp to the lightest breeze, were now unfelt, unrecognized. The whole face of nature was obscure to him—as it has been to many a wiser and worthier man—by that dirty debt; it was, for that matter, just as though he had carried the money in his eye. His tongue uttered "Good-morning," as the party came to the bridge where the footpath struck away to his father's house; but his heart went not with it. He thought it was the worst morning that he had seen for a very long time.

In this violent state of disapproval of the working of the whole system of the universe, he slammed the gate of the backyard behind him almost off its hinges; he kicked the dog that ran out to welcome him; he scowled at the cook, who was engaged at no worse occupation than cleaning the potatoes intended for his own dinner; and brushing quickly by the breakfast-room door in spite of the voice that hailed him so cheerfully from within, with "Fred, my boy, the muffins are getting cold," he ran straight up into his bedroom without reply. And all because he had lost thirty shillings, and did not see his way to pay the debt.

CHAPTER II.

THE CHOICE OF A PROFESSION.

IF Frederick Galton had been a lad with no particular mental inclination, it is certain that he would have grown up to be a surgeon. Before he was nine he had professionally visited all the neighborhood within a radius of ten miles round Casterton, and was as well known as his father, the doctor. He only held the reins and sat in the gig, it is true, unless when he was hospitably invited to enter and be regaled with brandy-cherries, a favorite mid-day refreshment in the Down country, and excellently adapted to the climate; but he was put in possession of the entire case as soon as the visit was over and the gig-wheels once more set a-rolling. He got quite to associate that expostulatory squeak which the Down gives forth when one drives over it, with pathological symptoms; and to identify particular spots—long chalk-hill roads, for the most part, where enforced tardiness of motion begat verbal prolixity—with certain tedious diseases. It was a disappointment to the good man that his son evinced no passionate interest in those pre-*Lancet* narratives, as we may call them—for the best, that is to say, the worst, of the cases often found their way into the columns of that journal, and made the most private ailments of many an unconscious rustic the theme of European controversy, under the medical *nom de plume* of "Mr. A., a gentleman of phlegmatic disposition;" or "Mrs. B., a lady of full habit." The doctor would have liked to have seen Frederick's leisure devoted to amateur experiments in his laboratory, or passed in company with the electrical machine at least; and he was beyond measure distressed when Ponto (poaching) had the misfortune to get his near foreleg (it was very nearly "off") in a gin, that the lad could not even be induced to witness the operation for compound comminuted fracture, but shut his eyes, and closed his ears with his fingers.

It was surprising enough that Dr. Galton should wish his son to embrace a profession of the drawbacks of which he had had himself no little experience, but it was the case, nevertheless. If he had been a bishop instead of a parish doctor, he could not have dwelt more unctuously upon the advantages of his calling. Considering all circumstances, this liking, indeed, may be said to be inexplicable, save upon one hypothesis—it must be considered to have been a cerebral affection, and if we might have presumed to dictate remedial measures to a medical man, we should have suggested warm water for his body, and the placing of his head well under a cold shower-bath, until the symptoms abated. For the doctor's experience had been as follows. When Dr. Galton *bought* the medical curacy of Casterton, some twenty-five years ago, it returned him just thirty pounds per annum, paid quarterly. The Board of Guardians might have made a cheaper bargain with an inferior man; but such an advantage in the medical profession is a scientific reputation, that they elected Mr. William Galton in preference to all other competitors, on account of his excellent testimonials. Besides this income, there was an extra allowance, averaging seven pounds a year, for vaccinations and midwifery cases; and, moreover, the title of Doctor was conferred, not by courtesy, but because the neighborhood knew no better. There were, however, two thousand people to be "attended" for this money, being at the rate of rather over threepence-halfpenny a head per annum; while the parish being straggling, it was absolutely necessary that he should keep a horse. He had also to supply medicine gratuitously, which service was a serious item, because he had the misfortune to be an honest man; otherwise, he might have stocked a small dispensary with diluted drugs and sick leeches at a reasonable figure.

The usual course of an English parish doctor (not one of whom, not even the late Mr. Palmer of Rugeley, to their honor be it written, has yet committed the justifiable homicide of poisoning his entire Board of Guardians), if it runs smoothly, and is not cut short, as it sometimes very naturally is, by debt, disappointment ending in drink, and moonlight departure without paying the rent, is as follows: He does his work among the poor (very hard work it always is, and aggravated in the Down country by fogs and snow drifts) to the best of his power, and waits patiently, trusting and being trusted, for an opportunity of exhibiting his skill among the rich folks, whose housekeepers and servants are in the meantime his only paying patients, with the exception of a few farmers' wives. The farmers themselves are never ill, and their consorts often prefer to resort to a "wise woman," to cure their maladies. The county folks always send a mounted groom into the neighboring town for old Dr. Pouncet, (in whom they have "great confidence,") and are shy of calling in a young parish doctor. Accidents and apoplexy, however, are both, luckily, of frequent occurrence in a hunting county, and these form the happy chances, whose skirts the new-comer must grasp, and, having grasped, must never let go his hold. It was a sudden emergency of this kind which first brought Dr. Galton to the Grange of Casterton, and no other medical man was ever sent for afterwards to Squire Meyrick's. This was one of the oldest families in the neighborhood, although, in social cultivation, from their having been buried alive, as well as dead, at Casterton for so many generations, not much above the rank of gentlemen-farmers. Squire Meyrick had, however, as great a disinclination to die as the most polished of fine gentlemen, and was probably quite as grateful as any such would have been to the man who, by God's help, saved his life. Dr. Galton had brought him home from what had been likely to prove his last hunting-field. When a gentleman of sixteen stone pitches on his head from the back of a horse of sixteen hands, the vexed question of whether he has got any brains or not, is in a fair way of being settled. Mr. Meyrick, by getting his concussed, silenced the voice of detraction triumphantly. His wife never forgot the saving help which the kind doctor had administered on that cold November evening, and the comfort he had spoken to her aching heart, and she blew his professional trumpet for him ever afterwards, exaggerating, after the female manner, both the peril which her goodman had been in and the skill which had averted it; so that the doors of other "Granges," "Halls," and "Houses" in Downland were soon opened wide to the poor parish doctor, and had stood so ever since.

Whoever had seen Dr. Galton by their bedside in the hour of danger, was eager to send for him again in the like calamity. Not only was he—in spite of the discredit which the thing obtains among the fastidious Faculty—a really excellent "General Practitioner," but also an agreeable gentleman. In place of the one dinner per annum with the squire, and the two with the rector, but too often the limit of hospitality accorded to his class—who are thereby driven to mix with the lower stratum of society, a clay that is but too apt to moisten itself with gin and water—he became a favorite guest at all the great tables round. The county families were quite delighted when Dr. Galton married Ellen Morrit, the curate of Casterton's sister, instead of some farmer's daughter or other person "whom it would have been quite impossible, you see, for us to visit;" and strengthened by this alliance with the Church, and with no less than five horses in his stable (for his practice had grown so great as to demand that stud), he found himself, while still a young man, in a position which few of his order attain to at the close of a life's labor.

Mrs. Galton had died, however, within a year of her marriage. The widower's prosperity continued, but he cared little for it, since she no longer shared it. He had never loved worldly gear for its own sake, and would probably have retired from practice, had she not left him a son to profit by his exertions, the birth of whom had been the death of her he loved so dearly. At first the child had been almost hateful to him on this account; but as he grew up displaying the tender sensibility and affection, as well as much of the personal beauty of his mother, his heart seemed to yearn towards him, all the more that it had been at one time unjustly estranged. He could not bear to send the lad to school, out of his sight and superintendence; it seemed too hard that he should deprive himself of that one comfort in his desolate wifeless home; to hear the boy's cry of welcome, to clasp his hand, to kiss his cheek, was all he had now to look forward to, during those long drives over the dreary Downs; drives wherein for years the widower had bitterer companions than the wind and snow, in the unbidden thoughts of his own heart, wherein the love light had been quenched so suddenly. But Time, a more certain if a more tardy healer than any of the Faculty, had mitigated even this grief; and when Freddy became old enough to take his seat beside him on the gig, instead of a groom, his father's eye grew bright again, though never with the dancing merriment of his youth. In the innermost shrine of his heart's temple stood the veiled mute figure of his wife, and at times he would still retire there, to worship secretly; but his son now filled the rest of the sacred place, and his hopes and wishes for him were constant as the ever-burning candles of the altar. In the ante-chapel, if we may continue the metaphor, was admitted Robert Morrit, the curate, and his close neighbor, the only brother of his dead wife, and he who, next to himself, held her memory most in reverence. Dr. Galton excused himself, in part, for not sending Fred to school because uncle Robert, who was a great scholar as well as a good priest, had volunteered for the office of tutor, which, up to the present date, he had discharged most faithfully.

"Fred, my boy, these muffins are getting *excessively* cold," exclaimed the doctor for the second time, emerging from the breakfast-room into the little white-washed hall, and holloaing up the stairs to his offspring.

"Coming, sir," replied Frederick, cheerily, and it was no waiter's answer, for, as he uttered it, he came, taking the staircase in three flying leaps. He was in the best of spirits now, for he had hit upon a plan for paying the thirty shillings; and indeed the thermometer of his spirits was apt to sink and rise between nadir and zero with a rapidity quite disproportioned to any actual change in the temperature of his circumstances.

"Coming down-stairs like that is the very thing to injure the *patella*, Fred; but I am glad to see you so nimble. There are very few things which denote a vigorous mind more certainly than activity of motion."

"Then Mr. Meyrick's greyhounds ought to be great geniuses, father: you should have seen them racing up the ground this morning; Mangonel did the distance in the shortest time, confound him; but—" The young man blushed and hesitated; he would not have let his father know he had been betting, for a great deal more than what he had lost.

"I am glad to see you blush, my boy. Why should you make use of such a term as 'confound him,' instead of 'I am sorry to say?' And why should you be sorry that Mangonel, of all dogs, should have won?"

"He is a black dog," returned the lad, "and I hate black dogs: the other was a dun."

"You like a *dun*, do you?" observed the doctor, dryly. "It is very few of us who can say so much as that." And the father laughed as one who does not make so good a joke every day in the year; and the son laughed joyously back again, because he saw his father was pleased. Fred loved his parent dearly, and (which is not always the case with even the most dutiful of offspring) always enjoyed his company.

We may respect, nay love, an individual very highly, and yet prefer a *tête-à-tête* with a far less worthy fellow-creature. There must be something of an elder brother, perhaps, too, of a sister also, in a man who would have his son to choose him for a companion; and this Dr. Galton had. Had the pair but been a little more similar in disposition—even in their faults—the boy would have reposed every confidence, every confession of shame and sin, in his father's breast, loving as it was as that of a woman, and filled with the large charity of a good man; but unhappily their characters had nothing in common. They were within a very little of that confidential relation (so often rendered impossible by the senior) which, once established between parent and offspring, offers the surest safeguard to the latter to be found on earth; but they had just missed it. Frederick was well aware that any vice, nay, almost any crime, would be forgiven by his father, if he did but confess it penitently, but he also knew that it would not find extenuation. Dr. Galton was much the reverse of a hard man, and would certainly be considered by most persons as an over-lenient one; but his son, who knew him thoroughly (and who, indeed, young as he was, could read the characters of most men he fell in with), was well aware that the very inclination for certain vices—such as that of betting more than you can afford upon a dog-race—was wanting, and never had any existence within his father's breast; that he would have called it by some harsher name than it deserved, and ascribed it, not to the excitement of emulation (which was the complacent view the boy took of the matter), but to some devilish impulse almost unknown to the human breast. The doctor was of a calm, quiet, even temperament, prudent, though far from worldly, unimpulsive, and undemonstrative. Frederick was impetuous, enthusiastic, with feelings easily moved, and features that must needs at once express his feelings, even in the rare case of his obtaining the mastery of his tongue; passionate, too, he was, and self-confident beyond the warrant of his really extraordinary talents. A bishop's cob and an unbroken colt from the prairies would have made a less dissimilar pair. It is obvious that the latter must commit more escapades on the highway of life than his lordship's respectable nag, who would also be quite unable to account for the eccentricities of his yoke-fellow.

"Talking of duns," continued the doctor, "reminds one of years of discretion and responsibility. You cannot be passing such humdrum days, lad, all your life, as those you spend in Casterton."

"Why not, father? Why should I leave you and uncle Robert? I am quite content with my nag and such hunting and coursing as I can get, I do assure you. If you are not desirous of getting rid of me, I would willingly remain here always, even if you were not so good as to keep a horse for me. With bat-folding in winter, and hoop-trundling on the Downs in summer, I should be quite content."

"Hoop-trundling in your seventeenth year! I was really quite ashamed to see you and young Jack Meyrick yesterday going out with your hoops."

"Ah, but if you had been with us, father, you would have thought it capital fun. The wind was nor'-west, so we started them from the top of Kempsey Down; and after giving them two minutes' grace, my hoop was past the windmill, and Jack's rising the hill out of the bottom more than a mile away. When they came to ruts or roads, they would leap like deer. Mine took the Ridgeway in three bounds, upon my honor. We could scarcely have overtaken them, I do believe, if we had been on horseback. We had a run of just three miles, and found them not fifty yards apart in Whitcomb Warren. If they had not been stopped by the furze, they would have gone right down to the London Road."

"Well, that is better than going out with a hoop and a stick into the streets, Fred, I allow," returned the doctor, rather carried away by this exciting relation; "but still a hoop-hunt is not a pursuit to last your life. What do you suppose uncle Robert teaches you Greek and Latin for?"

"Oh, that's for the wet days, father, when, I suppose, I should be rather dull without my hoop."

"Ah, Fred, Fred," exclaimed the doctor, taking him by the ear, and pinching it kindly, "you are not going to get out of a serious truth this morning by any such show of simplicity. You know, you young dog, as well as possible what I am driving at, and you are moving that the question be put again this day six months, after the parliamentary manner; but it is really time that this matter was discussed."

"Very well, father," returned the boy, with downcast eyes, and fingers busy with the corner of the breakfast-cloth.

"There is one way, and one alone, my lad, by which you may yet live all your days in this peaceful village, where, if there are no great excitements, there are also no temptations, and where you are as likely to find happiness—the greatest happiness," sighed the doctor, thinking of that one cloudless year of his own life—"as anywhere in this world. There would be an interval, of course, when you will be up in London learning your profession; but after that you can return hither, become my partner, and indeed succeed to my duties as soon as you please. Even in case of your marriage, there is no reason why you should go elsewhere. We have lived too long together, I think, Fred, to have misgivings about dwelling under the same roof. I don't think I could bear to part with you, my boy, even to a wife."

Dr. Galton rose from his seat, blew his nose with unnecessary violence, and looked out of the window with intensity. Frederick followed him, and laying his hand upon his shoulder, whispered hoarsely: "Is there no way of remaining with you but this, father? Must I be a surgeon?"

"Have you the same strange antipathy to my profession, Frederick, as when you were a child?"

"Yes, father, quite the same. I feel I have not the heart, the nerve, for this cold-blooded cutting and carving."

"Then you will not insist, of course, upon entering the army or navy?" interrupted the doctor, eagerly.

"No, father," replied the lad, with a smile; "although I do not think they are open to quite the same objection."

"Then there is the Church," continued the doctor with cheerfulness; for he had felt that his darling hope of Fred's embracing his own profession had but slight chance of being realized, and was comforted to think that the lad at least entertained no desire for roaming.

"You must go to college and get ordained, and then you can come here and help your uncle to do the duty, and take his place when he is gone (which God forbid, however, should happen these many years); and thus you will be among old friends for all your days."

It was touching to watch the doctor's weather-beaten features as they brightened in the contemplation of this picture of his son's future. He already congratulated himself upon having secured the lad to himself for life; he felt the comfort of having set him out of the reach of many dangers, temporal and spiritual, which never could assail him in Casterton, and of having marked out for him a sequestered channel of existence, which, since he had himself found deep contentment in it, he did not doubt was eminently suited to the happiness of his son.

"Alas, father!" murmured Frederick, with great unwillingness to efface the cheerful picture which he knew was presenting itself to the doctor's mind, "I fear I shall never have a call that way."

"A call, Frederick!" repeated the other, almost angrily, "I do not know what you mean. I am surprised at hearing you make use of such a vulgar expression, fit only for Ranters. I wonder what your uncle would say!" For Dr. Galton was High Church, as was his brother-in-law—a fact which was not displeasing to nine-tenths of the gentry round. We do not say that if it had been otherwise the doctor would have been Low

Church, but it is certain he would have objected to the word "call" with somewhat less asperity. Or perhaps the truth is, that parish doctors see so much of those who are in want of religion altogether, that they cannot distinguish between the more delicate shades of it, but take them on trust from the eyes of those who have greater leisure to draw fine distinctions.

"Well, father, whatever we may please to term it, a man ought to feel something of that sort before becoming a clergyman."

"I am quite sure your uncle Morrit never felt anything so very ridiculous. These 'callings' and 'groanings' and 'movings' are nothing in the world but peculiar forms of hysteria, sometimes, I believe, complicated by colic."

"Uncle Robert was, you know, in some measure compelled to take orders to retain his fellowship," replied Frederick, gravely; "but when he became a parish priest, he told me himself, that he began to think of ordination very differently. One does say, you know, in that service, that you 'trust you are moved by the Holy Ghost to take this office upon you.'"

"That's very true," returned the good doctor, who had, however, been by no means aware of the fact. "I am sure, my lad, I am the last person to force you into a profession for which you are not suited; but I confess I don't like the law."

"Nor I, father; neither law nor lawyers."

Fred was generalizing rather freely from the particular case of a country attorney who had lately managed to mulct his friend Meyrick (or rather the squire) in the sum of seventeen pounds, including costs, for breaking down a certain fence, which their ponies were unable to surmount, and in which offence Jack had been aided and abetted by Fred.

"There is nothing left *but* the Church, you see," observed the doctor, brightening again; "and, doubtless, when you have been to college, and had your mind led to that subject for a year or two, you will think differently, and be able to take orders with a good conscience, after all."

Here the doctor's buggy came round in front of the window, which was a great relief to both the parties engaged in the above conversation. Each of them dreaded that a conclusion should be finally arrived at contrary to his inclination; and each of them trusted to time to effect his desired object.

"Perhaps it will be so," faltered Fred, "for no one can answer for himself so far ahead. I am sure I hope it will, father, for your sake."

The doctor kissed his forehead, which he had rarely done since the lad had been quite a child, and tolerably content, prepared himself for his long day's round.

Fred helped him into his great-coat, buttoned the gig apron down when he was seated, and inquired whether he had his flask of sherry with him, which he would else have left behind. It seemed as though he could not do enough to show his anxiety for his father's comfort. When the vehicle at last departed, he watched it from the stone steps before the cottage-door, as it wound its way along the great chalk-track to the Downs. For several minutes he felt ungrateful and undutiful to so kind a parent, who worked so hard and so ungrudgingly for him—not for not acceding to his wishes at once in the matter of the Church, but for withholding from him his own secret intentions—his settled purpose of adopting none of the professions of which his father spoke, but something else, which he had long ago fixed upon in his own mind. "And yet," murmured he, apologetically, "what would have been the use, if I had told him? I know so well he would never have understood me."

CHAPTER III.

DUMB MOUTHS.

THAT unexhilarating tragedy, the "Seven against Thebes" of Æschylus, was the book which Mr. Frederick Galton was to take up to his uncle and tutor that morning, and he revisited his bedroom to get it. As a grown man is known by the sort of companions he keeps, so the character of a youth is indicated by the furniture he gathers round him in his private apartment. If for the bell-handle he has substituted a fox's brush, and there are three hunting whips in different stages of decay upon the mantlepiece, we are not surprised to find his library but scanty, and his edition of the poets limited to a sixpenny Warbler, containing what are called comic songs, but compared to which Methodistic hymns are lively.

If, again, everything is scrupulously neat, and the bookshelves arranged with a view of displaying the bindings, one may feel satisfied, even without finding a nightcap neatly folded upon the pillow, that the lad will never die of brain-fever, or attempt to revolutionize the glorious constitution of his native land. While, on the other hand, if a few devotional works acquire an undue prominence, and are ostentatiously left out on the table by his bedside, we would not answer for what he might do, nor on any account have the run of his private desk or secret drawers. Nay, if a slight tinge of tobacco lingered about a young gentleman's room, though at the age of sixteen, we should say that even in that early reprobate there lay less dangerous elements. Shall we suppose the case of a "few well-chosen water-color drawings depending from the wall," and a "simple vase full of fresh-culled flowers upon the writing table?" No; such things might be about a boy in a book, or a boy whose mother kept his room in order for him; but a real boy, left to his own desires, be assured, fair reader, never did surround himself with such delicate elegances, notwithstanding much beautifully written evidence to the contrary.

There were two pictures, however, in young Galton's room: the one an engraving of the greatest living poet of the time, for poets do yet obtain honor even in these days, from the generation which is rising while they flourish; the other, too, a portrait, and, like the first, of one whose living features Frederick had never looked upon—that of a beautiful girl, dark, and large-eyed as himself, and about two years older. This was his dead mother.

His collection of books was extensive and various. The ancient classics were as well thumbed as those of a "sixth form" at Eton; partly because he rather liked them, and because he had been told (falsely) that through them lay the readiest path to the end he had in view; but principally because his uncle loved them, and made them the objects of Fred's study. Nevertheless, he took that "Seven against Thebes" down with an unmistakable sigh. He hated what are called "Books for Boys" of all sorts; but he would rather by half have borrowed Jack Meyrick's "Seven Champions of Christendom," than studied that verbose uninteresting tragedy; and he cast a regretful glance at the long line of English classics that stood invitingly above it, any one of which he would have greatly preferred. Shakspeare stood there, by no means as yet his favorite author, although he had begun to have a dim consciousness that in his plays were to be read the wisest and most wondrous things ever written by uninspired man. Not one in a thousand boys have the least love for Shakspeare; the most they can in reality lay claim to is a blind traditional admiration for him—

The desire of the moth for the star, of the night for the morrow;
The devotion to something afar—

and so far that they cannot get near enough, for the present, to recognize him at all. Very few grown men ever pore willingly over him, or read him privately for their own pleasure and profit. What they know of him, in spite of that voluminous edition, standing inviolate in their libraries, is from oral sources, and nearly all their quotations from him are at second-hand. They say that the great beauty of Shakspeare is that he is so easily understood, and in that respect has so great an advantage over modern bards; and as they do not blush during the delivery of this statement, we may charitably conclude that they believe it. If *men* therefore so rarely attain to the knowledge of Shakspeare, lads of sixteen—even of what is termed "genius"—are not likely to appreciate him very thoroughly. The boy in one of poor Mr. Leech's pictures who remarks: "Aw! Shakspeare; I consider him a veway overwated individual," uttered a sentiment in truthful accordance with the feelings of his contemporaries.

Master Frederick Galton was not indeed inclined audaciously to reverse the verdict of centuries, but for the present his Shakspeare was not dog-eared; neither was his Milton, though he was very fond of poetry, and his knowledge of classics rendered that great bard more intelligible to him than to most boys. It astounds me to hear Macaulay telling us that "Paradise Lost" and "Lycidas" obtain a universal admiration. But Macaulay was a ripe scholar, when—at nineteen—he tells us so, and he looked upon all things with a scholar's eyes. Fred's Byron was thumbed enough, and presented by no means a creditable appearance to his library. Shelley was dropping to pieces, from being carried out of doors, and blown about by the Downs' winds, while the Song of the Skylark in the summer air was the music to the words of the book, and fed the young reader's soul with a double joy. Keates, with his paper binding fairly fingered away, stood naked and not ashamed by the side of Wordsworth, for that philosophic bard and great interpreter of nature to the heart of youth was in little better condition.

As for the prose—which is by no means so instructive a feature in the mental diagnosis—there were histories old and new, but no travels save Gulliver's; there was fiction in plenty, which was certainly not placed there for show. Smollett and Fielding (not perused, we fear, by boys for their Shakspearian qualities), Charles Lamb, Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, all the humorists of modern time, in short, were there—that is, all that are within the mental grasp of a clever boy; for there is a stilted and unfamiliar style about those whom the author of "Vanity Fair" has so pleasantly treated of, which makes them *caviare* to the young.

There was another book, neither courting nor shunning notice by its position in Fred's library, which it seems to me (however contrary it may be to the practice of the most elegant story-tellers) should not escape notice—namely, the Holy Bible. On that, as on others we have spoken of, the dust but too often accumulates as it lies on the shelf in our palmy days of youth and vigor. We hope, as Dame Quickly says, that there is no need to trouble ourselves with any such things yet, and are mostly content to hear it read at church or in the household, as though it had no particular message for our private ear. Frederick Galton was in this respect little better than the rest of boys. His Bible, however, did not stand with the other books, but on the mantlepiece, beside the picture of his mother; perhaps undesignedly, or perhaps because to the boy's mind—which was far from irreverent—it seemed to be the most fitting place for it. The top of the drawers was littered with manuscripts in Greek and Latin; but the table standing by the window—from which a great part of the straggling village could be seen, as well as the top of the Round we have so lately visited—had usually papers on it of another sort; writings that were carefully put aside and packed in a drawer, when the occupant of the room was away, or popped into the big desk before which he sat, did any one enter while he was there. Although Fred was by no means neat in his ordinary arrangements, these sacred papers were folded and set in order with all care. Actuated by the sacred passion of paternal love, he watched over them jealously, for they were the first-fruits of his teeming brain. It is more than possible that the best thoughts in prose or verse there written might owe their origin to other literary parents; but if so, he was happily ignorant of it. Perish the wretch who, with sacrilegious finger, would point out his error!

For consider, thou respectable Paterfamilias, who hast never beat about thy brain for the plot of a story, or wearied thyself in vain over the Rhyming Dictionary for a tag to a couplet, how it would be with *thee* in such a case. Suppose at a time when thy half-dozen olive branches are "down at dessert" as usual, and thou hast a few friends to dine with thee, that one of those guests should begin to find likenesses out of the family for each of thine unconscious little ones: a nose here, and a mouth there, a turn of the eye, or a hole in the chin, common to others of their acquaintance, who are neither relatives, nor indeed especial favorites of thine own. Would not such conversation be unpalatable to thee, and such innuendoes against thy lady's honor insufferable? With indignation similar to thine own, then, would our young friend have met the calumnies which should question the originality of his "Hengist and Horsa," a tragedy in five acts; of his "Amabel," a melody; of his "Loves of the Village," a satirical, and, indeed, a slightly-libellous prose essay; or of any other offspring of his brain, so many of which reposed in that great desk of his.

How lovingly he now lingers there, while selecting one or two to place in his pockets, embarrassed by the number of the objects of his affection, like some amorous traveller who has been bidden by an eastern potentate, in gratitude for some great service done, to choose a wife from among the varied beauties of his harem. As one so tempted, if already married, might hastily divorce from his mind his European consort (residing at Wapping or other spot, whither the news of his infidelity need never travel), so Mr. Frederick Galton precipitately crammed the "Seven against Thebes" into his pocket, not without perhaps a fleeting mental comparison of the merits of certain ancient and modern authors, to the disadvantage of the former. His choice finally fell upon a translation from Horace, a few specimen chapters of a novel, the scene of which was laid in Punic Carthage, and a morbid and amorphous poem, called "A Frequent Thought;" and having carefully distributed these manuscripts about his shooting-jacket, he locked his desk, and ran, or rather leaped down-stairs.

Mrs. Hartopp, the housekeeper, with a letter in her hand, met her young favorite as he rushed out of the hall into the passage at his usual rate of indoor travelling when in good spirits, which was something over seventeen miles an hour. She was very stout, and the passage narrow, so that had not the young gentleman stopped himself upon the instant, a collision would have been inevitable.

"Mercy me, Master Frederick, what a pace you do go about a house, to be sure! Cats is nothing to you."

"Don't you know I'm a locomotive, and that you should always shunt yourself on to a siding when you hear *me* coming, Nanny?" replied Frederick, laughing. "The law ought to be put in force which forbids any obstruction of the line."

"Line indeed! See, there's your father gone, and I don't know what to do about sending to the railway station. There's my niece Mary, she writes, coming by the mid-day train—she as is going to help me, you know, a bit, and learn about mince-meat and such-like before she goes to live in London—and there is nobody to meet her, poor young thing. James has gone with the gig, you see, and she has never travelled from home before in all her life."

"*I'll* meet her, Nanny," cried the boy, good-naturedly. "I'll bring her back in the sociable, as carefully as if she was eggs."

"*You*, Master Frederick? Certainly not. A pretty thing, indeed, for a young gentleman like you to be fetching the likes of our Polly. Although they do say (for I have not seen her myself since she was *so* high) that she is uncommon well-looking for her station, and, indeed, she comes of as good a —— Why, bless my life!" cried the old lady suddenly, and turning of a lively purple—for a great thought had struck along her brain, and flushed her cheek—"if it ain't carrier's day! Jacob Lunes will bring her, of course. I'll just run round at once, and catch him before he starts." And Mrs. Hartopp tied her cap-strings under her chin in a huge bow, which was all the additional clothing she considered necessary for an expedition into the village at that season.

Nature, indeed, had taken the housekeeper under her care in respect of temperature, having covered her with something more than plumpness; while art had seconded her efforts by bestowing garments of the warmest complexion as well as texture; so that latest summer, even in breezy Casterton, had scarcely a wind to cool the good lady, and far less to give her a chill. Nevertheless, "Let *me* run, Nanny, to the carrier's," exclaimed the young gentleman, gallantly; "I think I can run faster than you."

"'Deed, and you can do that, Master Fred," cried the housekeeper, laughing; "but, thanking you kindly all the same, I'd rather go myself. You're late with your larning, besides, this morning; and your uncle Morrit is as punctual with his work as is our gray hen with her laying, and makes almost as great a clacking about it. So go along with you, like a good boy." And Mrs. Hartopp, gathering the folds of her dress together in front, after the female fashion, and knitting her forehead at the boisterous weather—which was her usual substitute for a bonnet on such excursions—stepped out upon her errand.

CHAPTER IV.

THE REV. ROBERT MORRIT.

THOUGH the Rev. Robert Morrit was ecclesiastically but the curate of a poor parish, his social position was good. He held a fellowship at Camford, where he had taken an excellent degree—which set him in easy circumstances (provided he remained a bachelor) for life.

The living itself, which was in the gift of his college, would fall to him upon the demise of the present vicar, who was an involuntary absentee, and kept in a state of suspension by his bishop—the living and the village, as Mr. Morrit himself used pleasantly to observe, being both sequestered. The curate, as we have hinted, was an archæologist of some reputation, and his love of antiquity extended to his cellar, where there was as good old port to be found as in any house in the county. His enemies—for the good man was not without them—asserted that he had obtained that wine by dishonest means. He had, they said, taken an opportunity of revisiting Minim Hall ("a poor college, but mine own," as he was wont to term it) at a time when its very limited number of young gentlemen were "down," as well as their pastors and masters, and only a few weak-minded old Dons in residence, such as neither foreign nor home landscapes could entice from their combination-room during the long vacation. By these lonely old gentlemen, Mr. Morrit was welcomed with such enthusiasm that they produced some of that "twenty port" for which the Hall had long been famous—although that priceless bin was fast diminishing—and he was rumored to have repaid their hospitality thus.

"Why, bless my soul, this port is going!" observed he, as soon as he set lips to it.

"Going!" echoed the Principal—all the ruby liquid (not unlike the precious wine of which he was partaking) ebbing swiftly from his cheeks—"going where?"

"It's getting sick," quoth Mr. Morrit, firmly: "the aroma is gone, the body is vanishing, and six weeks hence it won't be drinkable."

If the University Commission (an unhatched serpent's egg at that period) had then been sitting, and had just decreed that half a year should see the end of Camford as an English university, the Principal, the Bursar, and the third Fellow of Minim Hall, then present, could not have been possibly placed in a lower stratum of spirits.

One sipped his wine like a sparrow; the tongue of another flickered like that of an ant-eater about the brim of his wine-glass; the eyes of the third grew dazed with staring at the shining liquid as he held it up between him and the sun. They began to imagine that there really was something excessively wrong about that port.

"I wish to goodness Hickup was here; but he's in Petersburg," observed the Bursar, sighing. "I am sure *I* don't know: it certainly does taste queerly, Morrit, now you mention it."

"Deuced queerly," assented the third Fellow, who, nevertheless, had had several glasses.

"What are we to do?" inquired the Principal. "It will be ten thousand pities to let it spoil in the cellar."

"Drink it," said the third Fellow, decisively.

"Then we must telegraph to Hickup, or he will have a fit when he comes back and finds it gone. Now what do you advise, Morrit?"

"Well, you see, it's no affair of mine; I'm so seldom up: but if I were in *your* place, I should say, 'Sell it,' sell it to somebody who can give a long figure for it, and afford to drink it quickly."

"We have been offered eight guineas a dozen for it," observed the Bursar; "and we have got more than twelve dozen left. I suppose a dealer would not look at it, however, if it is really going."

"If a wine merchant tastes that wine, you are done," observed Mr. Morrit, gravely. "These things get about like wild-fire. The best way will be for one of you to buy it for your private cellar."

The three Dons looked at each other inquiringly. The Principal was a married man, and dared not do such a thing. The Bursar was not so particular about his drink as to feel inclined to pay any great sum for it. The third Fellow pertinaciously adhered to his original idea that they should drink nothing else until the "twenty port" was gone.

"I tell you what," observed Mr. Morrit, good-naturedly, "I'm only a curate, and not a rich man; but sooner than see my old college suffer such a loss as this, I'll take the wine off your hands myself, at five pounds the dozen. My Downs' friends are all port drinkers, and we shall manage to get through most of it, I dare say, while it's pretty good."

The Principal and Bursar were for embracing this proposition, as well as the generous being who had so sacrificed himself, and the Rev. Robert Morrit would have got clear away with the whole bin, but for the dogged pertinacity of the third Fellow, who insisted that there should be left enough to last them at the rate of a bottle a day until the other men came back. The curate, however, secured eight dozen; and there was a goodly portion still remaining in his Casterton cellar at the date of our introduction to him. Perhaps the change gave it body and improved it. But Professor Hickup, who only returned to Minim Hall in time to taste the very last bottle, protested, with many strong expressions unfavorable to the late purchaser, that the port was as good port as it had ever been; and upon the truth or falsehood of that verdict rested the charge made against the curate of Casterton.

Far be it from us to rank ourselves with the reverend gentleman's accusers; but there certainly was a humorous twinkle about his eye, and a dry wise smile about his mouth at times, which would almost befit the hero of such a story. He was not nearly so great a favorite with the gentry in his neighborhood as was his brother-in-law, and indeed they were a little afraid of him; but the poor, for the most part, although not without exceptions, loved him. He was more kind and gentle in his manner to their women than the patronizing and would-be charitable ladies, who gave themselves airs, and could not stand the closeness of a laborer's cottage. But he hated poachers and dissenters mortally—the latter of which wicked class were numerous in Casterton—and entertained a somewhat foolish and unreasonable family pride. An unhappy cousin of his, "removed" by ever so many genealogical branches, but who happened to bear his name and live in his neighborhood, was the bane of the curate's existence, because he chose to consort with indifferent characters, and to be drinking himself to death with ungentleman-like rapidity.

Mr. Morrit's mind was originally of an antique cast, and had been so warped in a backward direction by a long collegiate course of training, that he was really incapable of appreciating modern things. New potatoes and new milk, he was wont to aver, were all the novelties he ever wished to have about him; although it is doubtful whether his favorite study-chair, spring-hung, and moveable from within, or the patent reading-lamp that fitted into the arm thereof, were of that indistinct and far-back period from which alone, as he would have it, all excellent things originated.

A man of modern letters, who met Mr. Morrit at dinner for the first time, might have come away with the idea that that gentleman was semi-idiotic, as well as dowered with those malicious and snarling qualities so often inherent in persons of inferior mental capacity.

Master Frederick Galton, however—who, as we have said, was a pretty good judge of mankind for his years—was by no means of that opinion, and a very honest friendship existed between these two relatives. Mr. Morrit, who hated subservience so far as himself and his own belongings were concerned, and who perhaps did but profess Toryism as some men do Radicalism, only that they may the better exercise their personal independence, perceived in his nephew none of that tendency to lip-service which his fastidious eye detected in his brother-in-law, though it was, after all, maybe, nothing but that professional suavity with which no doctor, unless he be a man of acknowledged genius, can afford to dispense; while he gradually beheld his beloved sister renewed in the delicate features and gentle disposition of her son. The boy, on his part, reverenced the old-world knowledge that his uncle possessed, and appreciated his sarcastic humor, even when he himself was the object of his sting. Nevertheless, he entered the curate's study that morning with the "Seven against Thebes" in his hand, and the other three efforts of genius in his pocket, not without misgiving.

"What!" cried his uncle, perceiving unwonted dejection in his looks—for the boy was accustomed to climb Parnassus with his tutor with exceeding cheerfulness—"is it possible you don't take to the 'Seven,' Fred? Has that modern trash, which your father suffers you to read, corrupted your taste?"

"No, sir," answered Frederick (the "sir" being that sort of Addison-patriarchal style which especially pleased his uncle); "the 'Seven' is very well, but—"

"*Very well!*" exclaimed the idolator of the classics. "What the dickens do you mean by such an impertinence as that? Is there anything in your Byrons and the rest of them to compare with it? Is there anything *like* it, sir, to be found among the whole lot of your now-a-day poet-tasters?"

"Nothing, sir; nothing in the least like it, I do assure you," returned the lad with intense gravity.

Mr. Morrit carried his double-barrelled gold eye-glasses slowly to his eyes, and surveyed the youth for a full minute without speaking. "You know, my boy," said he at length in a gentle tone, "there is always a certain *tedium* for all parties concerned about a siege."

"Yes, sir; and there is a *Te Deum* for one of them, at least, when it is finished."

"Very good, Fred. That is a very pleasant epigrammatic method of intimating that you are tired of the 'Seven.' Now, can you tell me after what protracted siege it is probable that a *Te Deum* was first performed?"

The young man stood thoughtful and serious as became one who was employed about a great historical problem, although he was aware, by the twinkle in his uncle's eyes, that a joke was pending. "I have got it, sir!" exclaimed he at last, with his face like the sun bursting through a cloud. "It must have been the siege of Tyre that produced it." And the curate and nephew laughed together in a manner pleasant to behold.

This almost mechanical quick-sightedness for humorous allusion was one of the strongest bonds, perhaps, that united Mr. Morrit and his nephew; for out of such sort of sympathetic material, alas!—and still lower sorts, descending in some cases, even to a common liking for strong drinks, rather than of the strands of a common faith, morality, or what great principles you will—are the bonds of human friendships formed. There was nobody in all Casterton, nor in many a square mile around it, who was eligible to join that MUTUAL ADMIRATION SOCIETY of which the Rev. Robert Morrit and Master Frederick Galton were the sole members. On this account, the good priest was blinded to a greater extent than he was aware of, to the faults of his young parishioner and relative, and disposed to favor his inclinations; of which circumstances the youth, on his side, was by no means slow to take advantage.

It was through uncle Robert's solicitation that a horse in the doctor's stable had been set apart for the lad's particular use; that he had been permitted to take to "stick-ups," and had discarded jackets at least a year before those superficial changes had seemed necessary to his father and Mrs. Hartopp; and that he had discontinued the study of the low mathematics formerly imparted to him in private by the village school-master between the hours of seven and eight P. M. Nay, a stray expression now and then from the curate had doubtless helped to dissuade the doctor from pressing upon his son more strongly than he did the adoption of his own profession; and it was to the uncle rather than to the nearer relative that the young man was now about to unbosom himself fully upon that very subject.

Frederick had been watching for his opportunity since he had entered the curate's study that morning, and the siege of Tyre seemed to have afforded it, by putting his uncle in the best of humors.

"My father and I have been having a little serious talk this morning, sir."

"Ah, choice of a profession, I suppose, and all that sort of thing. You have come to the epoch when that unpleasant matter can be no longer shirked. Well, and how do you like the idea of being a saw-bones? Splendid prospect that calling affords you, does it not? Look at Galen, Dr. Sangrado, Dr. Faustus, Dr. Fell, and Sir Astley Cooper—names that are familiar to us all as household words. The lancet of the surgeon, lad, is as honorable, at least, as the weapon of the cavalry officer, while it is never used to destroy the lives of our fellow-creatures, but to save them. What other things were said, Fred, in favor of saw-bonism besides these?"

"Nothing; not even those, sir; although, if they had been dwelt upon, there is no knowing but that I should have been persuaded. As it was, my father said that 'he was sorry, but that he would never force my inclinations.'"

"Very good, very kind, and very right, Fred. And to what did you say that your inclinations pointed?"

"Well, sir, I—I—" and the usually voluble youth blushed and stammered, and was actually at a loss for a word.

"What remunerative calling did you hit upon? Come, out with it, lad, and don't be ashamed. Did you say you would be a poet?" and the middle-aged gentleman chuckled and rubbed his hands at the absurdity of the idea, while his nephew stood secretly fingering the translation from Horace, and the original verses of a morbid character, as they reposed in his coat pocket.

"I said I would go to college, and perhaps into the Church—

"It is usually termed taking holy orders," interrupted Mr. Morrit, drily.

"Well, sir, I said that I would do that, if—if—"

"If you were driven to it, and could not help yourself; quite so. Allow me to thank you, in the name of the cloth," said the curate, taking off the velvet head-covering which he wore in his study and while solemnizing funerals in windy weather, and which his enemies did not hesitate to call his smoking-cap. "This patronage of my humble profession is as unexpected as it is flattering."

"My father wishes it, sir," returned the lad, no longer hesitating, but in a tone of great annoyance; "and I shall do my best to gratify him; but my inclinations, I own, point very strongly to literature."

"Ah," replied Mr. Morrit, rubbing his chin, which was always a sign with him of intense dissatisfaction, "I see; they point *not* to holy orders, but to literature. The two things being quite incompatible, and wholly different, it would be a sad thing if a young man of your brilliant parts were lost in the ranks of an ignorant and boorish clergy. You entertain no apprehension of that kind—good; although, perhaps, you only say so, to spare my personal feelings. Then, what is the literature which you have in your eye, my young friend? The art of writing libels which are not actionable, under the name of 'leading articles'—leading, forsooth, a pack of blind fools into a ditch? Or are you for the serial business of the halfpenny journals? It was only yesterday that I saw the 'Mysterious Murder of Middlehampton, or the Midnight Yell,' advertised in letters of appropriate crimson upon the village stocks. You speak as though you were yourself the talented author of that work; if you are I congratulate you, and will take in the *Family Nuisance*, or whatever the name of the periodical is, until the thrilling narrative is concluded; that is to say, if you confine it within reasonable limits, for I have heard that it is considered injudicious to let these serial romances come to an end at all. You are an honor to our family," added the curate, fairly exploding with indignation, and as though all that he had said before was but as the powder-train that led to the mine—"you are an honor to our family, Master Frederick Galton, upon my soul you are!"

"I came here, sir, this morning," replied the young man, with forced calmness and vermilion cheeks, "under the mistaken impression that I should obtain from you, if not some sympathy, at least some good advice. I wish, now, that I had stopped at home, or held my tongue, and so at least have avoided insult."

Mr. Morrit's little splutter of family pride, compared with the indignation that glowed in the young man's features, and even lit up his very form, was as a farthing candle to a Budelight, and paled at once its ineffectual glimmer.

"Pooh, nonsense! Who wants to insult you, lad? I am an old fogy; and perhaps some of my judgments upon matters may be a little harsh—there." And the curate made a wry face, as though he had told a falsehood for the sake of peace and quietness. "Of course I was angry at your thinking of this scribbling being your sole profession. You may be a lawyer, soldier, parson, and still keep up any connection you may have formed with the *Family Nu*—, with the periodicals, I mean, devoted to the intellectual elevation of your fellow-creatures."

"I have promised my father to be a parson, if anything, sir."

"Very well, then. Go to the University; and when you have mixed with the best society there, and have got a little older, you will be better able to judge for yourself as to what is likely to suit you. The training cannot hurt you, at all events, but will either fit you for a pulpit, or purify and classicise your style for"—Mr. Morrit seized his chin with both his hands, but took them away again—"for modern literature."

"I am quite prepared to follow your directions so far, sir! but I must begin with literature at once."

"By all means," returned the curate, drily, but cheerfully; "here is half a quire of foolscap and a bundle of goose-quills, and you may take both home with you."

"I have begun already, sir, as far as manuscript is concerned," replied Frederick, naïvely. "I want to see myself in print, and, particularly, to make some money."

Mr. Morrit was far too wise a man to ask what his nephew could possibly want money for in a place like Casterton. His nature, too, though sarcastic and rough, was not without that innate delicacy which respects even a child's feelings, and without which no man is fit to wear the name of gentleman.

"My purse, you know, Fred, is quite at your disposal of course," said he, turning round to poke the fire, in order to disembarrass the young man as much as possible. He was well aware, from observations made at college, that your borrowers do not relish being stared at.

"Thank you kindly, uncle," returned the boy, greatly mollified; "but I do not wish that."

"You are in want, then, of a medium of publication?"

"Yes, sir."

"Will you let me look at these buds of promise, Fred?" said his uncle, smiling—"at those papers, I mean, with which you have been fumbling in your pockets all this time; or perhaps you will read them yourself?"

"No, sir—not now," answered the lad, firmly. After the indignities he had suffered, he had not the heart to read his specimen chapters of the novel concerning ancient Carthage, nor his translation from Horace, and far less the poetical fragment, which he knew was morbid; nor, indeed, did he consider his uncle to be in a frame of mind adapted for their appreciation.

"What are the names of them, Fred?" inquired Mr. Morrit, again bestowing his particular attention upon the fire.

Frederick rehearsed the barren titles rather sheepishly.

"Is the story about ancient Carthage a tale of real life?" inquired the curate, innocently; but his nephew could not but perceive the shoulders of his venerable relative shaking with inward merriment.

"I suppose so, sir," answered the young author, tartly.

"And has it been perused by any one save yourself? Has it had the advantage of any disinterested person's critical eye?"

Now, the only individual who had really been indulged with a glance of the Carthaginian story was Mrs. Hartopp, the housekeeper to whom Mr. Frederick Galton was accustomed to confide his literary efforts, after the fashion of Moliére. It was true, she admired them all to enthusiasm, but Fred was more than doubtful whether her eye could strictly be termed "critical;" so he replied, "No, uncle."

"Very well, my boy; it so happens that I can assist you in your little difficulty. A Fellow of our college, who was never good for much, and got dissatisfied with the quiet mode of life pursued at Minim Hall, went to London to 'read for the bar,' as the phrase goes. Either he did not read enough, or the bar didn't care for his reading, for he soon turned his gigantic intellect into another channel. He became an author of some little celebrity, and eventually the conductor of a magazine. The name of the thing is, I believe, the *Paternoster Armadillo*"—

"*Porcupine*, uncle—*Porcupine*. I know it quite well, It has generally one or two good stories, and now and then some excessively satirical reviews."

"Ay; is it possible that those can be the thunder of Gory Gumps? I forget why we called him by that name at Camford, his real name being Jonathan Johnson; but we always did so. Now, I daresay he will know what sort of articles are in demand as well as anybody, and I will ask him down about Christmas to have a talk with you, Fred. We shall all come out in the *Porcupine* afterwards, I do not doubt; but we cannot expect so eminent a person to visit us without our paying for it. Gory Gumps will come, I am certain, because he knows about my port."

Fred's countenance flushed with delightful thankfulness as he replied: "Thank you, uncle; I am sure I shall never forget your very great kindness."

"Ah, but you will, Fred," returned the curate, grimly, "and fifty other kindnesses of far more importance, if you have the luck to meet with that number. You are sixteen now, which is the epoch of gratitude; the time when you feel inclined to make over your whole property to anybody who happens to lend you an umbrella in a hail-storm—but that only lasts a little while."

Fred remembered, not without wincing, that he had more than once felt inclined to sacrifice his life in return for very inconsiderable benefits, and in particular, that he had been revolving in his mind quite lately a scheme for laying some of his worldly goods, when he should come to possess any, at the feet of a great social reformer, whose literary works had attracted his ardent mind. How many an impulsive youth has experienced the like generous yearnings, and yet, alas! how few the social reformers who have ever got the money!

With years we gain worldly wisdom; but for that we must barter many a trustful feeling, many a chivalric resolve, and be content to perceive many a vision splendid "die away, and fade into the light of common day."

"Well, uncle," replied Frederick, laughing, "if mine be the only age for proper appreciation of benefits, it is as well that I should now obtain as much of them as possible; so, until Mr. Jonathan Johnson of the *Porcupine* comes, will you lend me five pounds?"

A youth of equal impulsiveness but less sagacity would have asked for exactly the sum requisite for his present needs, but Master Frederick Galton was not the boy to put himself under an unpleasant obligation (for there is only one uncle in the world, and common to the whole race of civilized mortals, whose loans imply nothing of favor) for the miserable consideration of thirty shillings.

"There, then," cried the curate, handing the lad the money; "and I will excuse you your note of hand."

"I have one more request to make yet, uncle—that you will say nothing for the present to my father about my choosing literature for my future profession."

"Certainly I shall not," replied Mr. Morrit, curtly; "and, indeed, I sincerely hope that he may never need to hear of it at all. Till Christmas comes, Frederick, we ourselves will talk no more of it, for I would much rather that we should agree with one another, lad, than quarrel. There is no time now for the 'Seven against Thebes' this morning, for I am going hawking with the Tregarthens in half an hour."

"Is there hawking to-day, sir?" cried the young man, starting up with an expression of disappointment: "and there's *Bolus* with his off fore-leg so swelled that I dare not take him out."

"Come out on *Tentoes,* then—on *Shanks* his mare, as Squire Meyrick facetiously calls it. The meet is at Whitcombe Warren. A lad like you should be able to run by the side of my cob at his best speed, and besides, you shall take hold of my stirrup-leather."

CHAPTER V.

A DAY'S HAWKING AND ITS RESULTS.

"THE clouds are hanging low, Fred," quoth Mr. Morrit, as his stout cob clattered along the ill-paved village street; "I fear we shall have wet jackets before the day is over."

"Here comes the weather-wise squire trotting after you," returned the lad from the raised foot-pavement: "for a man who so seldom rises above the earth, his information as to what is coming from the skies is marvellous."

Thereupon up rode Mr. Meyrick—a weather-worn gentleman of sixty, whose face would have been eminently handsome, had not Nature omitted in it the element of expression altogether—in spotless cords, but with a shooting-jacket as black as the parson's and a hazel switch in his hand in place of a hunting-whip. "How are you, Morrit? How are you, young gentleman?" (the latter salutation being by no means so cordial as the former, for he was suspicious of youthful bookworms, and perhaps a little jealous of Frederick's well-known superiority to his own boy).

"I am hanged if I know what I ought to put on for such a sport as this. One can't wear one's coursing uniform, nor yet the green coat one uses for the thistle-whippers."

As a fox-hunter, Mr. Meyrick had a supreme contempt for the hounds called harriers, and indeed for most pursuits and pastimes except fox-hunting; but Mr. Tregarthen had sent round to give notice that his hawks would be flown on this particular day, and the squire had made a point of attending the sport, as a personal favor to that gentleman.

"Put on your red coat, man," replied the parson, gravely; "scarlet is the only wear for hawking in."

"My *red* coat!" replied the squire, with indignation. "I'd like to see myself riding after yon carrion kites in pink." And indeed the donning of that sacred attire for such a purpose--stained at the tails though the garment was, as though it had been used for pen-wiping—would have appeared to Mr. Meyrick no less a sacrilege than the turning out in full canonicals after a fox would have seemed to the Anglican curate.

"Your ancestors, however, were wont to hawk in colored coats before now," returned Mr. Morrit; "and perhaps in this very Chaldcote Bottom to which we are now bound. The ancient Britons, they say, first taught the pastime to the Romans."

"Ay, ay, but that was in very old times," quoth the Franklin apologetically, but not a little gratified, too, with this reference to the antiquity of his race.

"Yes, sir," interposed Frederick, laughing, "and their coats were for the most part coats of paint. On a day such as this is like to be, you might have gone out as brave as a rainbow, and yet returned washed out, to the homeliest flesh color, with nothing but a draggled feather in your hair to distinguish you from your humblest tenant."

This picture of Mr. Meyrick's return from hawking in the olden time set the curate shaking with inward merriment; but the squire was by no means so well pleased, and began to mutter certain statements of what he would have done with any impertinent young jackanapes, if Providence had seen good to curse *him* with a son of that description. It was perhaps well for the general harmony that his own offspring at that moment, mounted upon the long-tailed *Lightfoot*, came galloping up, at the sight of whom the ire of the old gentleman gave place at once to parental admiration. The lad, indeed, was good-looking enough, and rode like a centaur.

"How is't thou art so late, boy? Thou art, I doubt, but a dawdling chap," growled Mr. Meyrick, "and wilt ever be after the fair;" by which he did not mean the fair sex, who had not yet become a pursuit with Master John, but a village festival.

It was his humor thus to chide the youth on various occasions, while in his secret heart he considered him to closely resemble the angels; and never more so than when, as now, he had his hunting leathers on, and looked —every inch of his five feet eight—a perfect sportsman.

"I stayed, father, to help Bob give *Mortimer* his oil; that dog has been out of sorts this long time."

"Ay, ay," returned the squire, proudly, with a glance at Frederick, which seemed to say: "And when were *you* ever so usefully employed, I should like to know?"

Frederick was by no means daunted by that look, although he perfectly understood it; but presently Master John remarked upon the fact of young Galton's being on foot as a circumstance caused by his own carelessness. "I knew *Bolus* would go lame of that forefoot, Fred, if something was not done for it. If he had been my nag, I bet he would have been carrying me to-day, and as sound as sixpence!"

"You see," replied Frederick, tartly, who was somewhat out of breath, and perhaps out of temper, with running by the side of his mounted companions, who were by this time in full trot—"you see, I have not the good fortune to be a horse-doctor."

"Well, you are a doctor's son, at all events," replied Johnny, coarsely; "and there's very little difference between working up balls for horses and pills for——Oh, that's your game, is it?" and the lad was off his horse in a moment, picking up stones for reply to the missile which had whizzed within a hair's breadth of his head, before he could conclude his uncourteous parallel. Mr. Morrit's face, too, was scarlet, even to the very ears that had overheard young Meyrick's remarks; and the squire, perceiving this, hastened to interfere between the belligerents, whom he would else perhaps have permitted to fight it out themselves, being well convinced that in any physical argument his sturdy son would get the better.

"Drop you that stone, John," cried he, in a tone such as he was wont to use in rating his dogs. "I will have no brawling here: you insulted the young fellow first, and through his father, too, who is as good a man as any in the county. Drop that stone, I say."

"Come along, Fred," exclaimed the curate, not altogether sorry to see the boy so prompt to defend the parental scutcheon. "Take hold of my stirrup leather, for here is the turf at last, and we must canter on, if we would be in time. There is no boy worth a farthing who can bear malice after a run on the Downs. It seems to me that a clear wind like this clean blows all the evil out of one, and leaves us all pure within, like a newly-ventilated chamber."

"Ay, ay," assented the squire; "it does give one an appetite, for certain."

And with that the little company set off at a hand-gallop, which for nearly half a mile did not need to be moderated for the sake of the agile boy on foot. Perhaps his pluck excited the admiration of *Lightfoot's* rider, or perhaps, as the curate said, the air and motion had really an exorcising effect upon the demon of ill-will, for when they pulled up, John Meyrick at once dismounted, and offered his steed to Frederick.

"Jump up," cried he, "and let us ride and tie, as we have done scores of times before now. I am sure you must be tired."

But the other, though appeased at once by the kindly offer, protested that he was not tired, and that nothing would induce him to ride in his walking-clothes while John in top boots went on foot—a proceeding quite inconsistent with the eternal fitness of things. Perhaps John Meyrick was not sorry for this (for he was proud of his seat on horseback, and would scarcely have liked to have met the "field," composed as it was sure to be of many of the gentlemen of the county, without *Lightfoot* under him), but he professed to be so; and when Fred secretly slipped the thirty shillings, lost to him on the

Round that morning, into his hand, he said he was ashamed to win so large a sum from him—which he was not in the least. Upon each of these "tarry diddles," or white lies, however, we will hope the recording angel dropped an accurate tear, as their sole intention, and indeed effect, was but to reconcile. And so, in the same circumstances as they started, the four, after no little travel, arrived on the brow of the hill that looked down on Chaldcote Bottom. This was a broad level, plentifully sown with "turnups" (the *i* being changed into *u* in that euphonious district), and at the foot of those steep green hills which skirt the Downs almost everywhere.

The meet was appointed there for the convenience of the gentlemen of the vale, but they had to ascend, of course, before the sport began, to the grass-land. The Casterton party, therefore, waited for them upon the high ground, from which the whole scene could be accurately observed, and the *dramatis personæ* recognized. Especially remarkable among them stood out two stalwart forms: one of these was Mr. Tregarthen, of Tregarthen, to whose efforts the resuscitation of the ancient sport was due, a magnate of the county, with a landed property of some twelve thousand a year:

> A great broad-shouldered genial Englishman;
> A lord of fat prize-oxen and of sheep;
> A raiser of huge melons and of pine;
> A patron of some thirty charities;
> A pamphleteer on guano and on grain;
> A quarter-sessions chairman, abler none;
> Fair haired, and redder than a windy morn.

The other most remarkable figure was the curate's far-away cousin, Mr. Thomas Morrit. Although he had more than once been brought to death's door by drink, and was even now said to be on the point of paying him another visit, still he made a goodly show, like some huge tower whose walls have been sapped and undermined.

A gentleman of broken means, much given to starts and bursts of revel, but who could sing a good song yet

—which was, however, in no case a hymn—in a voice not altogether spoiled by drams, and who rode a bit of blood (the last of a goodly stud) five days a week to foxhounds, harriers, hawks, or whatever else was to be ridden to. At sight of him, the curate's brow grew dark, and his lips moved, shaping, it may be, some pious wish for his relative's reformation; he forgave him, perhaps, but he was unable, despite several efforts, to forget him, and it was clear that the good man's mirth was marred for the day. Nevertheless, his antiquarian heart was stirred within him at sight of the falconer with his bird upon his wrist—the magnificent Iceland hawk far finer than those from Wales or Scotland used in the olden times—hooded and feathered like a knight with his visor down, with his white lure (an imitation pigeon) and his string of bells. Some half-a-dozen other hawks were carried by an attendant on foot, upon a sort of hoop, so that there should be no lack of sport, if only the game were plentiful—not the stately heron, alas! in these degenerate days, but anything they can get; and on the Downs the noble creatures must needs stoop to carrion, and check at the astonished crow.

The knot of horsemen collected about these objects of interest was considerable, and the whole cavalcade began slowly to ascend the hill; as they did so, the little bells around the legs of the captive birds jangled merrily, and they moved their plumed heads excitedly from side to side, as though they knew their freedom was at hand.

"What a queer hunting-field it is?" remarked Mr. John Meyrick. "I'm hanged if they don't look like the mummers!"

"They revived old usages thoroughly worn out,
The souls of them fumed forth, the hearts of them torn out,"

murmured Frederick, quoting beneath his breath from one of his uncle's hated moderns.

"What a patrician look they have!" exclaimed Mr. Morrit, enthusiastically. "It is certainly *par excellence* the sport of a gentleman. The very technical names belonging to it have an old world and peculiar quaintness about them—mantling, and sniting, and pluming, and canceliering."

"And what does it all mean?" inquired Mr. Meyrick, contemptuously. "What do you understand by that very fine name you mentioned last, for instance, *canceliering?*"

The curate colored, and pretended not to hear.

"Come, what is it?" persisted the merciless squire.

Fred let go the stirrup-leather, and ran away screaming with laughter, out of reach of his uncle's riding-whip. Master John Meyrick and his father roared with merriment like bulls; it was *so* very seldom that the curate committed himself by talking of what he did not understand.

"The leathers by which the bells are attached to their legs are called *bewits,*" pursued the antiquary; "the thong by which the falconer holds the hawk is termed the *leash.*"

"I know that, parson," ejaculated the squire, "and so does every man who keeps a greyhound; but what is canceliering?"

The curate was glad to catch sight of his friend Mr. Tregarthen, as an excuse for riding away from his tormentor. Then the whole company moved slowly over the Downs with their eyes in the air, as though they were taking observations of the sun. Presently, they came upon the feeding-ground of those consequential birds, the rooks. Numbers of them were pacing the green-sward in the most solemn and decorous manner, and in the glossiest of black coats, as though each were awaiting the arrival of some distinguished deceased, on whom it was his duty to pronounce a funeral sermon. They pecked into the ground occasionally with their sombre beaks, but nothing seemed to come of it, and it appeared to be their especial desire afterwards to look as if they had not done it.

> "It is jolly to live like a great fat crow,
> For no one doth eat him wherever he goes!"

exclaimed Frederick, incautiously.

"That smacks of your now-a-day poetaster," observed his uncle quietly. "It is not good, and it is not true, as you will presently see."

Even while he spoke, this little army of black Brunswickers rose heavily, spread out their sable wings, and flapped slowly away, like a nightmare that is loath to leave a sleeping man. As soon as they had risen to some height, the falconer unfastened the hood of one of the splendid birds he carried, and its large eyes flashed forth like lanterns on the night. After a preliminary blink or two, it surveyed the fields of air as though it were their sole proprietor, and it was looking out for trespassers. Then, all on a sudden its gaze lit upon the sluggish squadron—for the rook, except at chess, is a slow mover—and his jesses were at once unfastened, and the cruel creature was away. As soon as the quarry became aware of the strange and terrible tyrant that was coming up with them, they separated in all directions, and the hawk for one instant vacillated, like an alderman in an embarrassment of dishes. Immediately afterwards, he had fixed upon his particular crow to pick, and pursued him, and him alone, thenceforward, with the pertinacity of a weasel after a hare.

He seemed to make rushes at him, and to miss him, as a too eager greyhound darts at and overruns his game; Mr. Meyrick expressed his contempt for the performance by that comparison. At last, however, as though a thunderbolt had indeed been shot from the bulging clouds, which were growing darker and darker momentarily, a black mass made up of pursuer and pursued dropped almost perpendicularly earthward; the hawk had stooped successfully. Ere it touched ground, however, was heard the falconer's shrill call, and the bird's precipitous descent was arrested upon the instant, and it came off, as if at right angles, to his master, bearing the rook in his triumphant talons. In the meantime, the more excitable of the company had been at racing-speed for several minutes, and more than one had paid the penalty of his too ambitious gaze by coming, horse and man, to Mother Earth.

The deep ruts, so deserving the attention of the flying horsemen, that intersect the Downs in all directions, had sent them headlong, and loud was the laughter from the more prudent that greeted their fall. The curate had to thank his nephew for his own escape from a similar calamity, for his blind enthusiasm would have led him once across a rabbit-warren, where the cob would have been certain to have put his foot into it, and, again to charge the Ridgeway itself—at that particular spot at least five feet high—had not the voice at his stirrup-leather directed his rapt regards to earthly matters. There were several more flights after the black game, with more or less successful results. Sometimes the hawk would seize the rook from beneath, and then descend with it, which is called *trussing*, but the stooping from above was the more common practice, and, in the pursuit of the rook, destitute of danger, though in that of the heron held to be unsafe, on account of that sagacious bird presenting his bill at the most inconvenient time—like a tailor in August—and receiving the hawk upon its point, who is thereby spitted. The day was wearing into the afternoon, and making a worse appearance, as regarded the weather, than ever, when a couple of hawks were flown at once, with the intent that they should work together upon a common quarry; but instead of this, they separated, one of them disappearing in the inky firmament, and the other, to the still greater distraction of the falconer, into a distant sheepfold, with the apparent determination of taking a little lamb. In the middle of this, the rain came down like a torrent. Mr. Tregarthen of Tregarthen gave vent to certain quaint but very irreverent expressions, which were held to be a sort of heirloom in his ancient family.

Mr. Thomas Morrit cursed himself in excellent Saxon for being such an idiot as to get himself wet through at such a sport as rook-hunting; and the curate venturing no word of condolence with the proprietor of the hawks, and not perhaps without a sly laugh in his already saturated sleeve, turned his cob's head homeward. The rest of the company, setting their coat-collars up like angry cats, started off at once for what each might deem his nearest shelter.

There was, however, no *tecta* within three miles for any mounted man of them; and Frederick for the first time congratulated himself upon being on foot, as he crept under a well-stuffed shepherd's hurdle that happened to stand beside the Ridgeway—albeit there was but small chance of any Dido joining him there. His appearance, viewed from without, was, of course, ridiculous enough, his place of refuge being neither more nor less than the trap which boyhood sets for small birds in the winter, with only a slanting hedge-stake to prevent it falling upon its occupant, but it kept him as dry and warm as a young lad at sixteen ought ever to need to be. Fast as it poured then, however, it was nothing to what was coming, for, through the slanting lines of the herald shower, he could perceive the wall of rain advancing from the west until it darkened the air around him, and brought home to him for the first time what the parish schoolmaster had striven in vain to teach him—how the motion of a plane produces a solid. It was a grand sight, but after a little, he began to draw upon his mental resources for means whereby to pass the time. He tried to picture to himself how the case would have stood if this had been the universal deluge, and he were the last man, and would, perhaps, have conceived something epical, but that the steadfast furious down-pour began to have its effect upon the covering of the hurdle, which distilled little rills of rain upon him—a slight inconvenience indeed, but it takes such a very little to interrupt poetical composition; then he fell back upon the intellectual stores of others, and commenced crooning to himself the songs and ballads that were dearest to him, a most excellent way of whiling away solitude, as well as improving the memory, and in every respect superior to the more popular custom of whistling the mere airs of the same—discharging the musket without the ball.

Having exhausted himself with rhymes, he tried blank verse, and declaimed to the elements in the language of King Lear, who, indeed, could scarcely have been treated by them worse than he himself was, except that he had his hurdle; so that if any native had chanced to pass that desolate place in the tempest, and heard him, it would have been noted as a haunted spot for the future in the spiritual chart of the Down-country.

Scarce a thorn-tree there stands ragged and bare, and spectral with the wool it has torn from passing sheep, but a mother and her love-child, at the very least, have perished under it most miserably; and let the wind be soft or loud, you may always hear her dying lullaby as you pass it. Scarce a plantation lifts its trembling head, and cowers under the hillside, but Long Jack, or Wild Tom the gamekeeper, has there been found one winter's morning, stiff and stark, with a jagged hole in his breast, and the black blood oozing, who never fails to make his moan o' nights to the belated traveller. But as for the fairies, who still hold their midnight dances on the Downs, as the fresh "rings" testify, and under whose feet spring up the visible flowers, their very existence is denied, except by the merest children, and all the charming stories appertaining to them are ousted quite by these raw-head and bloody-bone legends.

Frederick had never heard a single word of the "little folk" from Mrs. Hartopp, or any of his Casterton gossips; but the tale of the Phantom Huntsman of Chaldcote Bottom he *had* heard, who cheered his skeleton hounds not only cup in hand, but with *his head in it.* Fred was not habitually a believer in ghosts; but in that time of storm and solitude it was not without a tremor that he became for the first time conscious of other sounds about him than that made by the monotonous torrent. They seemed to shape themselves into "Hey ho, hey ho," like the sigh of a weary man, or like the faint "Tally ho," as Fred thought, of the huntsman in question, who, it was most probable, might by this time be excessively *blasé* with his pursuit. It could scarcely, however, be the headless horseman, for how could *he* sigh? Was it the wind in the hurdle? No; the wind never sang a song like this:

Love is a sickness full of woes,
All remedies refusing;
A plant that with most cutting grows,
Most barren with best using.
Why so?
If we enjoy it, then it flies;
If not enjoyed, it sighing cries:
Hey ho.

This was the song to which the "Hey ho" belonged, and well Fred knew both it and the singer—blithe Jacob Lunes of Casterton, ordinarily dealer in snuff and tobacco in that village, and carrier three times a week between it and the nearest railway station. On he came along the Ridgeway, splashing beside his large black mare, as though all over head was blue; albeit, his smock-frock, embroidered daintily upon the breast, as though he was some peripatetic high-priest, clung to his legs, wet through, and his wide-awake hat was as a little hill with a moat around it.

Love is a torment of the mind,
A tempest everlasting:
A Heaven has made it of a kind
Not well nor full, nor fasting.
Why so?
If we enjoy it, soon it dies;
If not enjoyed, it sighing cries:
Hey ho.

"Jacob!"

"Master Frederick! Why, who would have thought of seeing you here, or indeed any human creature! How you scared me with your rantin'! I was a-singing only to drown my fear of bogles. There—get up in the cart, do, and keep thyself dry. Not but that the rain will do a power of good, and is excellent for the turnups."

It was the specialty of the cheerful carrier to see good in everything. If Leckhamsley Round, which, as everybody knows, contains little beyond bones of men some fifty generations dead, and old-world coins and spearheads, had suddenly become an active volcano, and emitted streams of burning lava, Jacob would have expressed his opinion that it would be doubtless a good thing for the land. Fred clambered up the front of the vehicle, and from under its hospitable canopy endeavored to hold colloquy with its proprietor without; but the thing was impossible. He saw Jacob opening his mouth at fullest stretch, but whether to yawn or to make an observation, the violence of the storm would not permit him to know.

The carrier's finger, however, pointed unmistakably to the interior of the cart, which was half-filled with monstrous packages, and lay in shadow, and presently the lad's eyes followed its direction, and fell upon the fairest sight they had ever yet beheld.

A young damsel, very simply dressed, and modest-looking, slightly blushing, and yet shyly smiling, with her long-lashed eyelids drooped demurely over dimpling cheeks, was sitting close behind him, so close that his elbow almost touched her. Her attire was humble, and she sat upon one of those corded trunks (which none but females going out to service use), originally, perhaps, covered with hair, yet never seen by mortal except in a mangy and semi-bald condition, like the unhealthy hide of the tiger who is also a man-eater. And yet her face was delicate, and more than commonly soft in its expression:

A daughter of our meadows, yet not coarse;
Straight, but as lissom as a hazel wand;
Her eyes a bashful azure, and her hair,
In gloss and hue, the chestnut, when the shell
Divides threefold to show the fruit within.

Fred moved aside with a muttered apology for turning his back to her, and thereby placed himself within reach of the rain.

He was not wont to be indifferent to such little inconveniences, and he had a reputation for never being at a loss for words; but now he was content to be wet, and have nothing to say for himself. If it had been light enough for her to perceive the nape of his neck, she might have easily concluded that he was blushing all over very considerably. He was too well mannered to stare, but for the life of him he could not help throwing an occasional sidelong glance upon this entrancing and unexampled vision.

One of these uncredentialed ambassadors met a similar embassage about to set furtively forth from the maiden's eyes. The mutual embarrassment then reached its climax, and it became necessary to clothe the shameful silence with a word or two. The maiden herself was the first to set about that duty, and with a modest serenity observed, "It is very wet, sir."

The remark was in itself judicious, as not admitting of contradiction, while it courted sympathy; but the blush and tone with which it was accompanied would have recommended a much less objectionable exclamation. Indeed, I doubt whether Master Frederick heard the mere words at all.

> To him they mattered not one tittle.
> If those bright lips had quoted Locke,
> He would have thought they murmured Little.

As soon as he knew she had spoken, the charm that had enchained his tongue was removed. He was solicitous to know at what spot the storm had overtaken the cart; and when he found that she was a stranger to the district, there was ever so much to be said upon that subject. As he spoke of the hawking, too, the girl listened with interest to his account of a sport with which it seemed she had already had through books some little acquaintance. The talk was wholly on Fred's side, but her rapt looks were worth a hundred "*Pray go ons*" and "*How delightfuls.*" The manifestly unequal relation of these young persons to one another was soon lost sight of in that of eloquent narrator and grateful recipient.

They were both amazed, and turned impatiently to Jacob, when the carrier put his head in at the opening of the tilt behind, and said, "Now, here we are, a'most at journey's end, Master Frederick."

The cart, indeed, had reached the entrance of the village. The rain was over and gone, and the sun shining, although they knew nothing about it.

"I am sorry we have to part so soon," said Frederick, earnestly, imagining that this young divinity was bound for the farmhouse that stood close by.

"I am sorry, too, sir," answered the young girl, simply.

Master Frederick Galton held out his hand to say "Good-by."

"Why, you needn't be shaking hands, you two," quoth the carrier, laughing, "for you are both bound for the same house; only I thought the parson would not like it, if his nephew should be seen coming through Casterton in my cart along with the young woman. Not that there's anything wrong about it, of course; only he's so 'nation proud and particular."

"What in the name of common sense do you mean, Jacob?" inquired the young man, scarlet with indignation.

"Only that this is Polly Perling, Mrs. Hartopp's niece, sir: and this is your young master, Mr. Frederick Galton, Polly."

Frederick had up to that moment clean forgotten that the housekeeper was expecting her niece; and if he had remembered it, would scarcely have identified her with his charming companion; and so they had both come home together, quite unknowingly, in the carrier's cart.

CHAPTER VI.

AN EDITOR OUT OF TOWN.

THAT man must be an egotist indeed who has never chosen unto himself a hero; who has never looked up to one living fellow-creature, and done him homage in his own heart, as from a vassal and inferior. In childhood, we have only love or fear for those about us; but as soon as we are big enough to go to school, we nourish admiration.

The Cock of the School is commonly our first idol; but he is so far removed from us—on so tremendous a pedestal—that we set up a god in the same temple, to satisfy our reverential needs; such as Goldenmuth, the best classic; or Juan *Major*, who kissed the master's niece; or Gravemug, who got the divinity prize; or Chincks, whose father allowed him half-a-crown a week of extra pocket-money—according to the bent of our own disposition.

In adolescence, we no longer require the real presence of these objects of veneration. Our then Pantheon, which has been entirely restocked, and in which all the old statues have fallen to pieces of themselves, is composed for the most part of the heads, or of those we believe to be the heads of the calling to which we ourselves aspire: the Rev. Bohun Erges, Slimey Suttle, Q.C., or Admiral Buster. In manhood, and brought face to face with these chieftains, we perceive their metal to be so plentifully streaked with alloy, that the whole collection is afterwards carted away, and shot as rubbish; or we use the materials to form a few steps and a pediment, which we ascend ourselves, and remain there for the rest of our lives, in a classical attitude.

During the five or six months that succeeded the hawking at Chaldcote Bottom, the man who filled the largest space in the thoughts and aspirations of Frederick Galton was Mr. Jonathan Johnson, barrister of the Middle Temple, and conductor of that tremendous periodical, the *Paternoster Porcupine*.

The young fellow looked forward to Christmas as to a blessed season that should bring a living editor before his eyes for the first time. He pictured to himself an intellectual-looking being, all forehead and hair, whose conversation would be epigrammatic. The reality was disappointing. Mr. Jonathan Johnson had but little forehead, though his head was as bare as a bell-handle. His conversation may have been epigrammatic in intention, but that was all that could be said for it; it certainly was not antithetical, for he did but very rarely finish a sentence. The poor man had such a habit of stammering, that he could scarcely enunciate a single remark to the end, but repeated the first half of it a great many times over, by way of compensation. He arrived early one Sunday morning, quite unexpectedly, in a gig from the railway station, a vehicle having been despatched for him by the curate, according to mutual arrangement upon the preceding day, in vain.

He had nun—nun—not been able to leave tut—tut town; he had not been able to leave tut—tut—town in time to tut—tut—take; he had not been able to leave town in time to take advantage of that arrangement. He could now only stay till Monday. He got on with his conversation exactly like a carpenter with his plane, perpetually going back again over the same plank until it was all smooth and free from nodosities. He said that was the only way to kuk—kuk—cure a fuff—fuff—fell, the only way to cure a fellow of stammering. But the method was certainly tedious, and had not cured Mr. Jonathan Johnson. If you suggested a word to him when he was in difficulties, he would—unlike any other person who suffers from the like misfortune—reject it scornfully, although it was the very thing he wanted. He would hold you, with the tenacity of the Ancient

Mariner, in direst expectancy, while his colloquial plane was working, and you must listen (unless you knocked him down) until he had finished to his liking, or was brought up short by some insurmountable difficulty—a *b* or a *d*—in which case he would suddenly exclaim: "It's of no kuk—kuk—consequence," and wink with cheerfulness, as though he had made a most satisfactory peroration.

He had been so long in stating whether he would come to ch—ch—church or not, that the curate had walked off without him, leaving Frederick to conduct him thither, if it should please the great man to condescend so far, which it presently did. It was the winter-custom of Frederick and his father to sit in the rectory pew in preference to their own, because it had a fireplace in it, as the squire's pew also had, in that old-fashioned feudal church at Casterton. The curate was unable to make any alteration without leave of the absent rector, and was obliged to preach, like a prison chaplain, to a congregation who could not see one another, to a flock each family of which was folded in a separate pew. There were galleries indeed, and some few free seats in the aisle, with no backs to them, for the very poor; but the majority of the audience were enabled to enjoy themselves to the full after the fashion of that ingenuous farmer who confessed to his bishop that, for his part, he always passed sermon-time very comfortably—"I lays up my legs, my lord, and shuts my eyes, and just thinks of nothing like." The interior of the edifice was clean, because it was white-washed throughout; but it could scarcely be termed imposing. The Ten Commandments, which depended from a great beam which crossed the centre, were obscured by twice that number of fire-buckets, for which the churchwardens could find no fitter place. The upper gallery was so close to the roof that it was, for seclusion and independence, almost as good as a pew. Unless one snored very loudly, the preacher could never tell one was asleep there, and so entertain a grudge that might influence the distribution of the compliments of the season, in the shape of coals and blankets—for even divines are men. and it is doubtful whether many of them would now-a-days be found to heal a Eutychus, even if they had the gift. To Mr. Jonathan Johnson, however, whose mind was not deeply imbued with the proprieties of ecclesiastical architecture, the arrangements of Casterton church were satisfactory in a very high degree. The sight of the fire in his pew delighted him hugely; he flattered it, cautiously and tenderly, with the poker throughout the service, and even surreptitiously heaped coals upon it during the Litany, to the great scandal of the curate, who could not but behold the transaction by reason of his elevated position.

"This pew of yours is a pa—pa—pattern, sir," observed he, behind his hymn book, to Frederick. "It is the greatest mistake to connect discomfort with devotion, as the High Church people do. I hate those low-backed seats, where everybody looks at the pup—pup—parting of one's hair behind."

Frederick thought within himself that it must have been some time since such a liberty could possibly have been taken with the back of Mr. Johnson's head; but he only bowed gravely, blushing, too, not a little, because he felt that his uncle's eyes were fixed upon him and his companion like a couple of burning-glasses.

After morning church, Mr. Johnson paid so much devotion to cold beef and pickles, and, in particular, to some venerable cherry-brandy—which he endeavored to explain was taken only as a stut—stut—stut, but finally observed that it was of no consequence—that he pronounced himself unfit to attend afternoon service. Fred therefore accompanied the profane one in a walk up Leckhamsley Round. Winter had drawn his winding-sheet over the whole landscape, and Nature lay stark and gaunt beneath the glittering robe. The far-off river in the vale, which, save in the snow-time, glistened so brightly in the sunbeams, now alone looked blue and dull. The chalk-roads were one with the white Down. A few stunted thorns in the near foreground were transformed by the lavish genius of the season into trees of frosted silver. The pigeon-house that towered above the rick-yard of farmer Groves, as fitly as banner over citadel, was silver, too, and of a pattern more exquisite and chaste than ever was designed by artist-jeweller. The outlying cottages—disgraceful to the land in their scant accommodation (although no worse at Casterton than elsewhere in the Down country)—ill-floored, ill-roofed, ill-kept—shone forth like fairy bowers; the very pigsties dazzled the eyes that looked upon them; for Snow, like Purity herself, makes everything she touches, however homely, beautiful.

"How very glorious!" exclaimed Frederick, wrapt in admiration of the scene, and forgetting in it for a moment even the presence of the conductor of the *Paternoster Porcupine.*

Mr. Jonathan Johnson observed, with considerable difficulty, that it was very cold.

"But what a scene!" exclaimed the young man apologetically.

"It looks like Death, sir," returned the other with a shudder, "and as though there were no more twenty port, nor anybody to drink it. Let us go home; and by-the-by, why did that uncle of yours ask me down to Casterton, my young friend? He don't care tuppence for me, and he don't revere the *Porcupine.*"

"I am thinking, sir, of adding a humble unit to the literary profession in my own person, and he hoped that you might be induced to exert your powerful influence in my favor."

"Bless my soul, what a plain-spoken young gentleman you are! It's quite refreshing," stammered the gentleman from town. "So I am asked down here to be your usher into the world of letters, am I? Well, with all my heart, my lad, I'm sure, for I think I like you. We will talk the matter over after dinner to-night. But call me horse if I don't make Morrit pay for it. It shall cost him a second bottle to-night, I promise him, though it should give me gout in the stut—stut—stut—It's of no consequence."

CHAPTER VII.

ACROSS THE WALNUTS AND THE WINE.

THE curate dined at five o'clock, as his custom was upon the Sunday; but it was near eleven before his guest and nephew could be induced to leave the table. He delivered the conversation almost entirely into their hands, partly because he judged it better that the youth should make his own way with the man of letters, and partly because there were few subjects on which the editor and himself could converse without risk of a quarrel. With respect to religious matters, indeed, Mr. Jonathan Johnson was quite prepared to endorse the curate's views, just as he would have deferred to a soldier's opinion regarding military affairs, or a builder's concerning bricks and mortar; but as to politics, the gentleman from London opined that the ideas of a parson vegetating at Casterton were quite unworthy of the least consideration. Like all college Fellows who have been metropolitanized, he despised such as remained at the university, or shut themselves out of the world, just as the emigrated Scotchman contemns the Caledonian pure and simple. He himself professed the shifting faith of a Liberal Conservative, and held a Tory to be a sort of political mastodon.

"There's only one Tory left in London, sir, and that is my sub-editor, Percival Potts," said Mr. Johnson, after a controversy warmer than usual; "you shall be introduced to him the very next time you come to town."

The Rev. Robert Morrit muttered something in reply respecting editors both in-chief and subordinate, which, let us hope, was only a quotation from the commination service; and nothing more was said upon the matter. There followed, indeed, rather an awkward pause, until Mr. Johnson broke it by requesting to know how a young fellow like Frederick, who had no sermons to plagiarize, and no sick people to frighten, managed to pass the wintry time at Casterton.

"I go out bat-folding," returned the young man, laughing.

"Explain yourself. Bat-folding!" echoed the man of letters, with genuine wonder. "Come, I am going to learn something."

It is equally impossible to set forth in words the self-complacent expression of Mr. Johnson as he uttered that remark, or the contempt that overspread his entertainer's features as he listened to it. The editor and the curate each imagined one another to be the most ignorant (consistently with presumption) of the human species; they had each also an unduly elevated opinion of their own intelligence.

"We go out," pursued Frederick, "on nights when there is no moon, with a folding-net, about six feet high, and with long handles, which require a powerful man to work them properly. Another carries a lantern; the rest have very long sticks to beat the covers with. Our game, which is mainly sparrows, is found in ivied walls, under house-tiles, and beneath the eaves of ricks. The netter spreads his snare over such places as these, and the lantern is held behind it; then we thrash the ivy or poke the eaves with our sticks, and out fly the half awakened victims, making straight for the light, and on their way get entangled in the meshes. When a sufficient number are thus obtained, the net is folded and thrown on the ground, and the game is secured. Sometimes we make prey of a larger bird than we intended. We were 'folding' in the ivy underneath farmer Groves's windows last night; he put his head out suddenly to know what was the matter, and we, who thought it was an owl, clapped the net together rather sharply. I have his night-cap now."

Fred produced the article in question—a white bag, large enough for a beehive, and with an elegant appendage of red cotton. "In native ivy, tassel hung," said he, "we found it."

"The lad is always quoting, or misquoting, from your modern poets, Johnson. The poor boy thinks he is a genius like yourself, and wants you to give him a lift upon the long road of literature. I shall esteem it a personal kindness if you can do so."

The curate exceedingly disliked this asking of favors. It was a foolish boast of his, that he had never been indebted for anything to any man—that no one had ever put so much as a finger to help him with his earthly burden. It especially galled him to have to appeal to such a man as Johnson, that his nephew might be apprenticed to such a trade as Literature.

"Your nephew is very young," observed the editor doubtfully, inflating his lungs, as the manner of some prosperous persons is when they are about to be patronizing; "he must fuff—fuff—first fill his pub—pub—pub—"

"His pocket," suggested the curate, with impatience. "Nay, that's the very thing he wants literature to do for him, man."

"He must first fill his pub—pub—basket, sir!" exclaimed the editor, with a tremendous effort. "He must know something to begin with. He cannot set to work at once, spinning out of his own stut—stut—stut—(it's of no consequence), like a blessed spider."

"He is going to the university very soon," interposed the curate, who perceived that propitiation was become absolutely necessary. "Alma Mater may not teach a great deal, but she will give him, at all events, the rudiments of education. You must allow that much, my dear fellow; even *you* are indebted to her for the rudiments. Your classical acquirements are more evident in your works than you may yourself imagine."

Mr. Jonathan Johnson was a man of considerable acuteness, but he had the weakness of his order—praise, nay, flattery, was sweeter to him than honey and the honeycomb. He actually persuaded himself—for the time, at least—like one who delivers himself up to hashis—that the Rev. Robert Morrit *had* studied his works, and was delivering his deliberate opinion on them.

"Perhaps so," replied he, much mollified—"perhaps you are right, Morrit. I don't know any man's judgment, when disinterested and unbiassed, that I respect more than I do yours. I should like much to know, now, which of my books has most met with your approbation. 'Wife and Widow' is my own favorite, but many of my friends seem to prefer my 'Love in a Lighthouse.' The leading journal spoke very favorably the other day of the latter volume."

It was lucky that Mr. Johnson happened to mention these efforts of genius by their titles, or the curate would have been nonplussed indeed, for he had never heard so much as the names of them before. As it was, however, he responded with much gravity, and carefully averting his eye from his nephew, (who was well aware of the enormity of the tarry-diddle which the reverend gentleman was telling), that he thought that "Love in a Lighthouse" was—not to draw invidious comparisons between masterpieces—the more admirable of the two; he believed also, that that was his nephew's opinion, who was acquainted with all that had been written within the last ten years, and who, for so young a man, had a good deal of taste.

This was an ingenious device of the curate's; first, for reverting to the subject next to Frederick's heart, namely the launch of his little skiff on the waters of Literature, which seemed in danger of being swamped by the revolution of Mr. Johnson's own tremendous paddles; and, secondly, to shift from his own shoulders the burden of a conversation which was by no means without its difficulties.

"My opinion is, of course, worth nothing," observed the ready youth; "but that scene in the lighthouse, in which drunken Hans prevents the lantern from revolving, and thereby wrecks the *Arethusa* steamship, with his own sweetheart on board, is one of the grandest incidents of dramatic retribution with which I am acquainted. In my own humble efforts of the same kind, I have often endeavored to keep that picture before me, and I dare say am indebted to it for much which I persuade myself is my own."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the conductor of the *Porcupine*, rubbing his hands; "this is indeed gratifying. To earn the applause of the generation rising around him, is one of the writer's highest aims. And so you liked the 'Lighthouse,' did you, my young friend?"

"Let us see some of these humble efforts of yours, Fred," interrupted his uncle, who began to fear that the conversation would never escape from that literary Eddystone; "let us hear a chapter out of the Carthaginian novel of real life."

"Ah, yes, let us hear that," observed Mr. Johnson, with a slight yawn, and a very manifest diminution of interest.

"Or the translation from Horace," added the curate, "which will possess the recommendation of greater brevity."

"No, I won't listen to any translation," observed the editor, decisively. "It would bore me excessively to hear Horace read aloud in the original—how much more, then, to listen to him when rendered into English!"

The curate muttered something, not so much in defence of Horace, as in deprecation of somebody's acquaintance with the Latin tongue. "You were always a staunch mathematician, Johnson," was, however, all that could be distinctly heard.

"I have got a Fragment here," observed Frederick, diffidently; "a few lines which express a frequent fancy of mine—morbid enough, perhaps, and untrue, but—"

"Never cry stinking fish, young man," interrupted the editor; "you will find plenty of people to hold their noses at what you have to offer, without any warning from you."

There is no position in which civilized man can possibly feel less complacent than when he undertakes to read his own effusions aloud before a literary censor. In giving readings in public, he is comparatively at ease, since by their very presence the audience tacitly confess their inferiority, and he knows that he would not return the compliment by listening to one of them on any account whatever. But when a critical individual has the right of saying: "I don't quite follow you there;" or, "I doubt whether that scene be not somewhat coarse;" or (Heavens and Earth!) "Excuse me, but do you not think that that last chapter was just a little tedious?" I say that, under such circumstances, there is no man more to be pitied than the sucking author. Only imagine if the critical person should be drowsy, and the unhappy reader be compelled to resort to unworthy devices to recall him to a sense of his situation—such as dropping the manuscript with a great deal of noise and fluttering; inquiring with anxiety as to whether the wretch found himself quite comfortable; or even remarking with meaning: "Be so good, Mr. Critic, as to give me your *best* attention during the ensuing episode." Can any position be more humiliating? Can self-respect be destroyed by any more appalling method? I answer: No; not at least within the limits of probability. Although, perhaps, a parallel situation may be found in some wild effort of the imagination, such as the being appointed auctioneer while our infants are being disposed of by public roup, when the depreciatory remarks of very small bidders might perhaps produce an equal pain. A tragedian in want of an engagement, giving a private specimen of his talents before a manager—apostrophising the elements, as Lear, before an audience of one, and that one perhaps a Jew-bankrupt—must find it trying work. But then he is not uttering his own sentiments, the self-chosen language of his own heart, each carefully-coined and well-weighed word of which is dear to him.

One's proposal of marriage to some beautiful and accomplished young female is perhaps as embarrassing; but then it is soon over. You have not to plead for a couple of hours or so, while your love makes no sign, either one way or the other, but engages herself indifferently, with a toothpick, as your critic will do. In particular, it is impossible to read one's poetry to any advantage under such circumstances. "The chariot-wheels jar in the gate through which we drive them forth."

Mr. Frederick Galton, a young gentleman in general of much self-confidence, stammered almost as pertinaciously as Mr. Jonathan Johnson in the endeavor to enunciate his Fragment.

When the doors have closed behind us, and the voices died away,
Do the singers cease their singing—do the children end their play?
Do the words of wisdom well no more through the calm lips of age?
Are the fountains dry whence the young draw hopes too bright for the
faith of the sage?
And, like to the flower that closeth up when the East begins to glow,
Doth the maiden's beauty fade from off her tender cheek and brow?
Are they all but subtle spirits, changing into those and these,
To vex us with a feigned sorrow, or to mock us while they please?
All the world a scene phantasmal, shifting aye to something strange,
Such as, if but disenchanted, one might mark in act to change;
See the disembodied beings, whom we held of our own kind,
Friend, and foe, and kin, and lover, each a help to make us blind;
Set to watch our lonely hours, ambushing about our path.
That our eyes shall ne'er be opened, till their lids be closed in death;
And when so closed, will all things be as though we had ne'er been
born,
And e'en without those tears that are dried swift as the dews by the
morn?
That make us feel this fancy more, so strange doth it appear
How the memory of a dead man dies with those he held most dear;

As though there was an end, with life, of the mockery that beguiles
Our every act, tricks out our woes, and cheats us of our smiles,
And makes (but feigns) to love and scorn, and parts and reconciles.

There was a painful pause, when this unsatisfactory performance was concluded.

"Well, Fred," observed his uncle at length, "I am very sorry, but I must confess that I do not in the least understand what your muse has been driving at. What do *you* say, Johnson?"

"I think I see what the young man means," remarked the censor; "but it is at best, as he has himself observed, a morbid fancy, born of the egotism that is inherent in the literary character."

"How did you manage to eradicate that weakness in your own case?" inquired the curate, gravely.

"It was a kuk—kuk—case of der—der—it was a case of discipline of the mind, sir. I was determined to overcome it, and I did. Now, don't be discouraged, young gentleman; I myself have written several very indifferent poems. I thought myself at one time a great poetical genius. Perhaps I could really do as well as some to whôm the laurel has been universally awarded. I wrote a series of ballads once in the *Westminster Volunteer*, an amateur magazine of some merit, years ago. They are very good ballads, sir, but they were not appreciated."

"They were upon English history, were they not?" inquired Frederick, languidly. He could no longer feign to be interested in this man's confounded writings. He felt as if his intellect had received its death-blow. Mrs. Hartopp's commendation of his literary efforts had indeed always elevated him, but not without self-consciousness that that beer was small to get intoxicated upon; and the late reception of his Fragment convinced him of the worthlessness both of her approbation and of that which she approved.

"They *were* upon English history, sir," returned the editor, graciously. "I am glad you remember them. Did you yourself ever select a subject from the same source? It is better for a young man to do so; it affords a trellis-work upon which to train his luxuriant thoughts, which have rarely strength to stand of themselves. Your fancy, in particular, which is too subjective, sir, although full of promise, had better be confined for the present to some such field."

The color came back to the young man's cheek as he heard these words, and the embers of hope were fanned within him. "I have a short ballad here," murmured he, "upon 'The Death of Cromwell.'"

"I hope that it's written to the tune of the *Rogue's March*," observed the curate.

"I trust," said the editor, "it contains no disrespect towards the greatest pur—pur—pur—"

"The greatest puritanical scoundrel that ever spoke through his nose," suggested the curate.

"The greatest pur—pur—prince that ever ruled in England," quoted Mr. Johnson.

"You shall judge for yourselves," quoth Frederick, gayly, "and I hope it may please both your worships."

THE DEATH OF CROMWELL.

The wind was up and wild that night
  On flood, and field, and fell;
Untouched by man, from each church-tower
  There pealed a passing bell;
At midnight, all the land rang out
  The great Protector's knell.

The waves a solemn anthem rolled;
  The forests bent and brake;
The moon was hid; the stars were quenched;
  The wasted earth did quake;
'Twas meet God's every work should show
  When God that soul did take.

And all men stood, like sentinels
  Who hear about their posts
The ring of spear, the beat of hoof,
  The clang of charging hosts;
But wist not if 'tis friend or foe,
  Nor who hath won or lost.

And far beyond the tossing seas,
That tempest tore the vine,
And whirled their snows from Alps to Alps,
And levelled low the pine;
For all that dwelt in Christendom,
'Twas meet should see the sign.

But round his rocking palace-gates,
The great Protector's guard,
The men that had no chief but one,
Still kept their watch and ward,
And prayed so loud and earnestly,
The tempest scarce was heard;

For well they knew him near to death,
Their tried and trusty friend,
Their leader in a hundred fields,
And matchless to the end;
God had not, to their iron arms,
Another such to send,

Whose name was dreadful on the Earth,
And dreadful on the Main,
'Neath whose broad shield God's people couched,
Nor put their trust in vain
In him who taught Rome charity,
And bent the knee of Spain.

As, through that night, from hour to hour,
The preachers, grave and sad,
Came forth from where great Cromwell lay,
With what dark news they had,
Did each stern veteran weep to hear,
As weeps some orphan lad.

"This night is our great general's last,
A death-time fit and rare
For him who gave to God the praise,
And whom God gave the war.
This is the night of Worcester field,
Brave comrades, and Dunbar;

"And lo! his thoughts are with you now,
The chosen of the Lord.
His brows are knit, his hands are clenched,
He dreams he grasps the sword.
'Let us go down to Gilgal, men,'
Was his last spoken word.

"This morn he saw the sun break forth
As on that Dunbar day,

And strove to prop him on his arm,
To meet the broad bright ray;
'And let the Lord arise,' had said,
But had not strength to say;

"But we spoke for him to the end;
All noontide wrestled we,
But since the tempest first was stirred,
His heart is back with *ye*,
And now he cries: 'They charge, they charge!'
And now: 'They flee, they flee!'"

Hark! hushed is every breath of air!
Marked ye this sudden lull?
How star by star comes forth in peace
To meet the moon at full?
Great Cromwell's soul is other-where,
And other realms doth rule.

"That's de—de—devilish good, young man!" observed the editor, dogmatically.

"A great deal too good for the subject," objected the curate. "Where the lad picks up such abominable sentiments I am sure I cannot think."

"Pooh! the boy's all right," quoth Mr. Jonathan Johnson: "it is easy to see that he's in the Carlyle stage just now."

"And where will that carry him to?" inquired Mr. Morrit, grimly.

"No very great distance, as I believe myself; but Percival Potts affirms, to Toryism. All distinguished persons, Potts makes out to be Tories at heart, and whatever they say that is good, he contends to have, at bottom, a Tory signification. You would get on with Percival Potts, sir, famously."

"Umph!" grunted the curate, as though he would say he trusted to end his days with philosophy, even if he should never make the acquaintance of that gifted gentleman.

"Percival Potts," continued the editor, soliloquising, "is one of those men who do not really care three skips of a lul-lul lamb for any principles; but finding Toryism less represented in literature than other *isms*, he adopted it, and has worked it with some success. The possession of it gives him a sort of excuse for the display of his insolence—and he is a very insolent beggar to his equals, is Percival—because it entitles him to say: 'I am naturally humble; I revere my superiors; I am the last description of individual to give myself airs.' If there is so much as a baronet in the room, however, Potts is always on his best behavior; and, when intoxicated, he is amusing, since in that state he never fails to favor the company with his own genealogy, the links of which he supplies as he goes on from his perfervid imagination. You must certainly meet Potts, my dear fellow."

"He must be charming indeed," observed Mr. Morrit, with gravity. "I count the hours until I see him. In the meantime, Fred, have you got any more manuscripts?"

"Has he got any more?" repeated the editor. "Why, bless my soul, Morrit, he has thousands. These things are to the literary aspirant as shoots are to the sapling. They are mental minutions—blood-lettings of Nature's own, without which the patient would die of congestion of the brain. They are the favorable intellectual eruptions, which carry off goodness knows what diseases, but madness, certainly, for one. Now, have you not a chest full at home, young gentleman—a large three-storied chest full, such as linen is generally kept in? Come now, confess."

"I have a pretty large desk full of them," replied the young man, modestly.

"Good. I will come over to-morrow morning, and overhaul them; and if there is anything worth having, you shall see it in the *Porcupine*. And now, Morrit, let us have a second bottle to wash away this taste of literature. The honey of Hybla cloys one's palate confoundedly, but of the bee's-wing of good port wine we never tire."

The curate left the room, to return with a saw-dusty bottle held slantingly in both his hands, like an infant, and with a tenderness at least equal to most child-carriers.

"Now, Johnson, take the screw, man," said he; "and be very careful not to jerk the cork out."

Mr. Jonathan Johnson acted as directed, while the Rev. Robert Morrit held the patient firmly between his knees so that the liquor was arrived at, with the least possible shock to the system.

The London editor lay back in his easy chair, smacking his lips at intervals as the port went down, like minute-guns at sea.

There was of course no more conversation, except upon the "vintages," respecting which the two full-grown gentlemen were duly wearisome, and asserted the usual falsehoods. I forbear to repeat them, since the ignorance and contemptible ambition of mankind are never perhaps so painfully apparent as when they dilate upon this unhappy subject.

"I have not tasted such wo—wo—wine as that, Morrit, since I last dined at Minim Hall, near fourteen years ago," said the editor, solemnly, as he lit his bed-candle, after consuming three spills in the attempt.

"I dare say not; I can easily believe it," quoth the parson, with a movement of his venerable head.

And yet that second bottle was by no means "twenty" port, as the curate very well knew, but of a vintage much more modern, of which a considerable quantity could be still obtained of the provincial wine-merchant, without favor, and at a moderate price.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SHADOW IN THE HOUSE.

WITHOUT immediate reference to that unhappy skeleton in the cupboard who has been so very hardly worked by modern novelists, we may safely say, that there is commonly something "going on" under most roofs which it is the interest of the party or parties concerned to keep exceedingly quiet. The more respectable—that is to say, the more extensive the household—the more numerous of course are these domestic secrets. In the boudoir or the housekeeper's room, in the heir's chamber or the tutor's garret, in the master's study or groom's apartment over the stables—a shadow almost certainly abides in one or more of these, crouching down and cowering away from every on-looker. Only one, or two persons at most, are aware perhaps of its existence, but there it is. In rare cases, it is never discovered, nor will be till the great day for the discovery of all secrets; and now and again, the black and unsightly thing breaks forth before the eyes of all men, and casts its gloom over the entire dwelling, with all that are in it. But, most commonly, the event lies between those two extremes: the lantern of some domestic detective is turned in an unguarded moment upon the objectionable intruder, and there ensues what is facetiously termed "a row in the pantry" (not, of course, that the butler need be concerned in it), a mitigated "coming to grief," as it used to be termed at Dr. Softsoap's academy for young gentlemen, when one of us was privately withdrawn instead of expelled. I protest that I think Paterfamilias may consider himself fortunate if the matter takes these moderate dimensions, and only happens about half-a-dozen times during his head-mastership. The volcano which lies beneath his and every man's mansion may perhaps be content to expend itself through these insignificant outlets; but if everything has always gone smoothly and respectably with him and his, let him tremble in his too-easy chair, for the time of eruption must needs be drawing nigh, and the pyrotechnic display will be upon a scale proportionate with its infrequency. There need not be of necessity a murder in that house; but it is only too probable. As to the startling details of his (Paterfamilias's) irascible temperament, and the administration of his horsewhip to the female servants; as to Materfamilias's attachment to Eau-de-Cologne as a refreshing *drink;* as to his eldest son's flirtation with the governess, and other little household *ana* of that sort—these will, of course, make their *incidental* appearance in the course of the principal catastrophe; they will form the accessories of that thrilling scene which will one day present itself to the public, when the curtain is suddenly pulled up, by the hand of the law, without the prompter's bell. But the scene itself! Heavens! there will perhaps be a pamphlet published about it, with wood-cuts, adapted from existing works of fiction; Paterfamilias himself being misrepresented under the guise of "Bertram the Bloodsucker," as he once appeared in a cheap novel that was never popular. Of course, after the explosion has taken place, all the neighbors assert that it was nothing more than might have been expected; they themselves had long heard rumblings, earthshakings, portents of various kinds, which, however, from feelings of "perhaps mistaken delicacy" (and the fear of actions for libel), they had not communicated to others. But in sober truth, before that great finale, with the blue and red fire at the wings, exhibited itself, no such spectacle was at all anticipated, and least of all by many of the *dramatis personæ* of the piece themselves; all was genteel comedy with them, without the least tincture of melodrama.

Where, for instance, to all appearance, were the elements of such a catastrophe in the limited household of

Dr. William Galton, general practitioner, at Casterton? consisting as it did of him and his son only; Mrs. Hartopp; Mary, "niece to the above," as the old playbills say; Sally, a maid-of-all-work; John, a groom. From what we already know of the good doctor, we may conclude that no suspicion of drink, far less of philandering, need attach to *him*. The housekeeper, too, was placed by time above temptation from the affections; and as to liquids, she never touched anything stronger than the home-vintages, such as cowslip and ginger wine; not from virtue, but because "wines and sperits," as she expressed it, "allays flew to her head." The groom, a sober person, who liked drab for its own sake, was engaged to marry Sally, a circumstance which, to those who were acquainted with that young lady's personal appearance (she was mottled throughout, that is to say, as far as the public eye could range, like brawn), appeared strange indeed, but still not sufficiently so to be romantic. Mary Perling, the quiet lass who took so handily to mince-meat, was good-looking enough, it is true, to have caused ten Trojan wars, but who was there left to woo, far less to quarrel about her? "To conclude—but it's scarcely worth while to put that in—there was one little boy; but he only learned Latin." A youth of such tender years that he had not yet gone to the university, but was engaged with mere preliminary studies, could scarcely be considered a dangerous element in any household. That, at least, was Dr. Galton's opinion, the lad's own father, who surely ought to have known if anybody did. "My son," he would have said, and not without a certain digdity, had we ventured to question the fact, "is a mere boy, who has not (I am thankful to say) been contaminated by evil example. He is a good lad, too, and incapable of committing a baseness. Indeed, his disposition is so open and candid, that it could scarcely harbor a secret under any circumstances."

This is the blessed creed of many fathers. Mothers are even more trusting except in certain cases, when their darling innocent may be within reach of any ravening wolf in petticoats, bent upon the destruction of his youthful happiness. If Mrs. Galton had been living it is doubtful whether Mary Perling would have been suffered to make mince-meat in that house so long. She would have been provided with a most excellent situation somewhere else, not within walking-distance of Casterton, in less than a week after her mistress had heard that her son and the young woman had come home in the carrier's cart together.

Master Frederick had not followed Jacob Lunes and his fair charge to his father's house at once upon that occasion. He had given them time—thereby, doubtless, doing some violence to the exceeding openness of his disposition—in order that their arrival and his own might not be simultaneous. Had not the carrier said that uncle Morrit would be annoyed to think that his nephew and Mary had been fellow-travellers (although, as Jacob had very truly observed, there was no sort of harm in it); and might not his father have a similar objection?

Frederick had therefore waited, dawdling on the outskirts of the village, and at length entered the home-gate with his hands in his pockets, and whistling, as though nothing remarkable had occurred. Want of thought is not invariably the reason why folks whistle; they sometimes do it to conceal their thoughts. One man will whistle upon finding himself in a lonesome lane at night, and seeing a couple of suspicious fellows with bludgeons lounging at the far end of it, in order to suggest the idea of a carelessness which he by no means feels; while another, who flits behind him, will whistle in order to let these gentlemen know that there is game coming their way likely to repay any trouble they may be put to in securing it. It is also without doubt the habit of many polished persons to whistle melodies in order to hide their annoyances, when they would much rather (if it were but consonant with etiquette) expend their breath in maledictions, or even physical violence.

When, therefore, Mrs. Hartopp met her young master at the door, and said with a grin: "So you came home with my niece Polly, did you?" she might have knocked that young gentleman down with a feather. He was an exceedingly clever fellow, there is no doubt; but he was but a male creature, after all. His stupid idea of concealing that he had already met with the house-keeper's niece was in every way worthy of his sex. On the other hand, Mary's first words to her aunt, after their mutual salutations were over, had acquainted her with all the circumstances of the case. She was not a very clever girl, and no more *intrigante* by nature than the rest of womankind; but she at once foresaw the imprudence (though, perhaps, not the impropriety) of sharing any such secret with her young master, which Jacob Lunes would have it in his power to reveal at any time. The misogynists—allied with whom, alas, is Materfamilias—will call this cunning. It was nothing of the sort; it was merely the working of that instinct of self-defence with which Providence has endowed every unprotected female; but for it, there would be far worse havoc among them even than there is. I do not doubt that the hawk affirms the doves to be a most deceitful race. I have known many men in many cities, yea, and even simple gentlemen in country-places, but I have never known one (though the victims are popularly believed to be as plentiful as blackberries) who has been "ensnared by a female." Ensnared! As well you might say that the sparrows ensnared Master Fred when he went a bat-folding. What cowardly falsehoods men repeat to one another concerning this matter; those, too, whose very professions would seem to demand of them truth and chivalry. To hear them talk, one would imagine that a young gentleman who would be virtuous, or not married against his will, must needs go about the world with the word *Engaged* placarded on him, as though he were a railway carriage, and that even that might be an insufficient security.

It is quite probable—nay, certain—that every female who has attained the age of seventeen or so is more or less upon the look-out for a husband. A man has his own calling, a score of things to concern himself with, among which marriage is but one, although, indeed, it occupies a prominent place. A woman has only marriage to look to; and she does not lose sight of it sometimes so early as might be desirable. Moreover, she is often desirous to marry well; unduly anxious ("Designing, artful hussy!" clucks Materfamilias, covering her male chicks, if they have any expectations, with her indignant wings) to ally herself with a class above her own. This is a great weakness. But have men no weaknesses of the same sort? Do they stoop to no fawnings, no trucklings, no time-servings, in order that they may mix with people a round or two higher on the social ladder than themselves? Truly, as the people of Siam approach their aristocracy upon their stomachs, so do many of *us* go, all the days of our lives, when in presence of our superiors, as though the curse pronounced upon the serpent of old was shared by the toad-eaters. But except the trifling losses of independence and self-respect, no hurt happens to the male whatever. No Lady Clara Vere de Vere of real life ever yet made a tenant-farmer cut his throat for love of her; our agriculturists (male) are not such fools as that, whatever the Radicals may say. But with the woman, it is different; in this weakness of hers lies a great danger. She stakes high—higher than she can afford, more than is becoming—for a great prize, and sometimes she loses all.

Mary Perling's father had been a wheelwright in a country village, and would have left his widow and family pretty well to do in respect of fortune, if he could have kept out of the public-house. He had not been a drunkard, but had enjoyed his glass and social companionship overmuch for his station in life. Had he been a gentleman, and spent the same time at whist, or in a club smoking-room, there would have been nothing to complain of; but as it was, he had been considered, and justly, to be a dissipated man. The proportion of income which a poor man spends in pleasure of that sort (if he spend anything) is very great, as compared with the expenditure of the rich. All pleasures are dear, save such as gathering primroses, and it is not every uneducated person who has a pastoral taste. So, finding herself left with straitened means, and having another daughter at home to assist in the house-management, Widow Perling sent her Mary out to service, although she was not absolutely compelled, by reason of poverty, to do so. She was not a beggar, at all events, that might not be a chooser as to the nature of the girl's employment. A somewhat superior place, as assistant to an ancient housekeeper, had been procured for her in Grosvenor Square, London, in the family of one of the county members; and in the meantime she had been sent to her aunt Hartopp to learn to make certain dainties and preserves, as well as to lay in a stock of the bracing air of the Downs against the time she should be "in city pent." Mary had not been brought up to work at anything more serious than samplers; it had seemed a pity to her father, to her mother, to everybody, in short, that saw her, that such a lily of the field as she should be made to toil at all; and indeed, so long as Abraham Perling was alive—a stalwart skilful man, who was never out of work, nor sick (save that dread once, when it was unto death)—there was no necessity for it.

Mary, therefore, was almost as ignorant of useful arts, as any lady, and had a lady's hands; she could play a few simple airs upon the piano rather nicely; she had acquired a smattering of French, which, however, she was never foolish enough to attempt to pronounce; and she had devoured a couple of small circulating libraries. May be these had done her harm. We poor writers of fiction are always making beauty triumphant, and smoothing away the direst social difficulties from the path of merit. "Take her, you dog, take her: there is thirty thousand pounds upon the mantle-piece, and it's yours," cries the relenting guardian or opulent uncle, in novels of the affections *passim*. And perhaps Mary mistook fiction for real life. Moreover, she had always been made much of, admired, paid court to, while at home, as though she had been a superior being to those about her (which, indeed, to all appearance she was). She was a perfectly modest young woman, but without much humility of mind. She did not think *vin ordinaire* of herself by any means. It is probable she was never impressed with the absolute impossibility of Frederick Galton becoming her husband; it is certain that she was not by this time—at the period of Mr. Jonathan Johnson's visit to Casterton. She had, it is true, thought the young gentleman an angel, as she listened to his eloquence in the carrier's cart; but he had given her to understand that he at least reciprocated that sentiment. She had never seen any one so handsome, so brilliant, so attractive, in all her life before; but neither had he been similarly favored, and he had told her as much, more than once—an admission which *she* had not been betrayed into. She had looked up to him, as Endymion to the moon, as though he had been a divinity; but the luminary had descended of its own accord, and assured her of her mistake. If either of them was more than mortal, he protested that it was not he but herself.

Then the young gentleman had a powerful ally in the muse. He wrote verses to the beloved object, accusing her of coldness, wherein "Mary" rhymed with "chary," and slipped them into her hand when opportunity offered (which was but seldom), upon the sly. This was the worst feature of Frederick Galton's courtship. It was underhand, secret, and entailed all sorts of lies—white, piebald, and as black as Erebus.

This was the shadow that haunted the good doctor's house. To do him justice, the young fellow had no idea of wronging the poor girl; on the contrary, his deliberate intention—if intentions can be called deliberate which are mainly entertained to excuse present ill-conduct—was to marry her; not to-day, nor to-morrow, but whenever it should be convenient, and afterwards to educate her, after his own fashion. He would teach her to appreciate Shelley. At present, she wanted insight into that poet, and couldn't abide—she used the word "abide"—his "Sensitive Plant," to which Fred had especially drawn her attention, and indeed had once read to her aloud, in a voice of the deepest feeling. The circumstances under which she had listened to it were indeed every way favorable to poetical sentiment. The young couple were alone, and in a charming spot, on the south side of Leckhamsley Round; the mighty fosse was almost filled up with underwood, amid which grew innumerable wild flowers. It was there that the village children found the first primrose, and the earliest violet of the year. The blue-bell and the hare-bell rang their silent peals there to every breath of summer wind.

This lovely spot was called by the grateful folks of Casterton, Eden; and it was also by no means unprovided with serpents. That was the one drawback to the pleasure of wandering in that sunny place, which once, perhaps, had sheltered Cæsar: ever and anon, there would run a shudder through the flowers, and then a reptile would cross your path, and make you shiver in spite of yourself, and though you knew it could not hurt you. Thus it happened on the very day that the "Sensitive Plant" was first read; and the young lady was infinitely alarmed at the occurrence: it was doubtless due to the confusion of that moment that Mr. Frederick Galton made use of a rather warmer expression than their mutual relation warranted.

"These serpents are perfectly harmless," he said, "*dearest.*"

Perhaps she did not hear him; it is certain that she omitted to box his ears. Mary Perling could reach Eden from Casterton by walking about a mile and a quarter; Frederick Galton dare not get thither under five miles.

She approached it by the road leading directly to the Round; while he had to leave the village at the other end, and stroll away in the opposite direction, until he could make a safe détour. This may serve for an example of the sort of footing upon which these young folks now stood with respect to others. There was nothing open and straightforward about it; and the shadow in the unconscious doctor's dwelling darkened daily. It may be thought singular that the father should have been without the least suspicion of anything being wrong with his son, for the lad was certainly changed in manner, and even in disposition. He had often to be addressed more than once before he returned an answer, whereas his ear had been wont to be ever keen and attentive to the paternal voice. His air was becoming distraught; his step had lost its elasticity; he had no appetite for breakfast; his spirits, except by fits and starts, were low. It was a pity that Dr. Galton was a medical man, or else he would scarcely have put *all* these symptoms down to liver.

Mrs. Hartopp also, it may be reasonably imagined, would have kept too vigilant an eye upon her niece to admit such "goings on" to be long undiscovered. But Mary Perling was vigilant too, as the circumstances of the case required. She had the most innocent countenance—"the mirror of the maiden mind within"—that ever was seen; her smile was angelic; her color was that delicate rose-tint which belongs to the western clouds a little after the sun has left them—the memory of a hue, rather than the hue itself. As she never blushed like a vulgar peony, her aunt concluded that there was nothing to blush about.

Mary happened to be passing through the entrance-hall when Mr. Johnson called on Monday morning, in pursuance of his promise to Frederick; and although it was not her place, she answered the ring at the bell. The editor was an enthusiastic (æsthetic, of course) admirer of female loveliness, and presently took the liberty of congratulating the doctor (who had remained at home that forenoon on purpose to receive him) upon the comeliness of his domestic. He protested that he had never seen any one so beautiful, and at the same time so modest-looking.

"Ay, ay, indeed," said the doctor, "she is a pretty lass enough."

"Which of them was it, father?" inquired Frederick, carelessly, who had been up-stairs at the time of Mr. Johnson's arrival.

"*Which of them was it?*" repeated Mr. Johnson, without stuttering, and italics. "Is it possible, then, that this household comprises *another* such?"

"O nonsense, Frederick," interposed the doctor. "It must have been Mary, of course; there can be no sort of doubt."

Presently, Sally came in, bearing the luncheon-tray in her mottled hands. Frederick looked with steadiness and determination at the grate, but he felt that the visitor had his eye upon him, and that it was not the fire alone which was making his ingenuous countenance crimson to the roots of his hair. What demon of indiscretion had induced him to make such an observation, I know not; nor did he know himself; he only knew that he had made it. *Which of them was it*—that is, Mary or Sally?

If such double-distilled hypocrisy had evoked almost a reproof from the simple doctor, what must a shrewd man of the world, like Mr. Jonathan Johnson, think of it? Frederick would have treated his own remark as a piece of humor—a jest—but the time was gone by for that. He ventured to look up while the other two were making conversation, with as unconcerned a glance as he could assume, but dropped his eyes immediately, while a shudder ran through his veins.

Dr. Galton was pointing out the top of the Round from the window, but the editorial gaze was not wholly following his directions: it was fixed in part upon Mr.

Frederick Galton, and was saying, as plainly as eye could speak: "You are certainly the most impudent young humbug We ever beheld."

Mr. Jonathan Johnson fraternised greatly with the doctor; his guileless and inartificial character delighted the town-reared gentleman, whose study was mankind. The home-made sausages, which had formed a portion of their late meal, were such as could not be got in the metropolis, and excited the rapture of the guest; the host expatiated upon them as a more fashionable gentleman would have scorned to do, except upon his wines—but then what the doctor said was true. He described minutely the different parts which made up the harmonious whole. "Mrs. Hartopp," said he, warming with his subject, "was equal to even greater achievements: mince-pies for example—there were some upon the table, and Mr. Johnson might judge for himself."

The editor was dyspeptic, and avoided all pastry upon principle, but, nevertheless, he despatched one of these country dainties with much content. "It is exquisite," said he; "but perhaps it requires a little cor—cor—cor—"

"Get the French brandy, Fred," exclaimed the doctor, whose practised ear was acutely sensitive to the physical needs of his fellow-creatures. "A corrective, as you suggest, cannot possibly hurt one; but there is nothing whatever unwholesome in that pie. Mr. Absit, our non-resident rector here, and an excellent judge of good things, gave me the condiments for it in his own handwriting before he went abroad. He recommends that the mince-meat be buried in the earth a week or two. I am sorry your visit to Casterton is such a flying one: if you could have stayed over dinner-time, you should have tasted our black puddings; they are made after another of the rector's recipes, and a very characteristic one. 'Chop the fat,' writes he, 'into *pieces of the size of small dice.*' He was too much given to play, especially for a clergyman." Thus rattled on the genial doctor, well pleased to have so eminent a listener as the conductor of the *Paternoster Porcupine*, who, he had Frederick's word for it, was one of the most intellectual men in Europe.

At last, however, the inevitable gig came to the door, and host and guest shook hands with cordiality. The doctor, however, little knew that upon that stranger's decision as to the literary value of certain manuscripts up-stairs, which he himself had never even set eyes upon, depended mainly what profession his son would follow for the rest of his life.

Master Frederick, too, little knew it was owing to the favorable impression that his kind-hearted father had produced on the editorial mind, rather than to the intrinsic value of the performance itself, that his critic presently bore the infliction of the Carthaginian novel so good-naturedly.

"Do you think, sir, that the Punic tale will do for the *Porcupine?*" demanded the youth with diffidence, not unmixed with hope, after he had read several selections.

"Bless my soul and body, no, sir," returned the editor with irritation; "nor the epic poem either; nor the confounded rubbish about the probability of your finding an early tomb; nor any of those things of which you think most highly. But you entertained me yesterday with a most excellent account of Bat-folding; write that out at length in your best English, and I will send it to the printer's at once, and give you a couple of guineas."

The enthusiastic lad could have embraced this bald-pated Mæcenas, who had *thus* unbarred for him the jealous gates of Literature. He wanted to accompany him to Mr. Morrit's house, in order to see the last of such a benefactor; but Mr. Johnson declined that attention, upon the plea that he had only an hour to spend with his old friend, and wished to have some private talk with him.

If Mr. Frederick Galton had known *why* he wished it, so far from being grateful, he would perhaps have made a desperate attempt to strangle his Mæcenas, before he left the paternal threshold.

CHAPTER IX.

THE INFORMER.

THE Rev. Robert Morrit was an old bachelor, and a somewhat selfish person, as all bachelors are, and perhaps one or two married men also, but yet he really loved and admired his nephew. He was opposed to his adopting literature as a calling, but he would have been mortified to hear that the lad's talents were not sufficient for the exercise of that profession, and therefore awaited Mr. Johnson's verdict with some anxiety.

"Well, and what do you make of my boy, eh? Is he up to the standard? Is he fit to be enrolled in the ragged regiment?"

The editor was a little piqued at this, for he himself had at one time been unappreciated by publishers, and, unless for his fellowship, would scarcely have fared sumptuously, or employed a very fashionable tailor. "He will do very well for a drummer-boy," returned he. "There is no knowing what he may turn out, but at present I can detect no idiosyncrasy—"

"I am glad of it," interrupted the curate, snappishly. "I never hear that word without thinking it is derived from 'idiots' and 'crazy.' People generally use it without in the least knowing what it means, and when they do know, they attach a value to it which it does not possess. There is no class so untractable and unsatisfactory at college as your idiosyncratic young gentlemen—boys who imagine themselves adapted for some exceptional pursuit, which is usually a more or less disreputable one. I know them well, sir." And the curate looked at the editor as if he knew *him* particularly well. "Nay, sir," he continued, "they are very often mistaken even in that, and have no more real affinity with their self-chosen pursuits than the wood-cut of a halfpenny ballad has with the subject it embellishes, or the glees at a public dinner have to the toasts which they accompany."

"The toasts are sometimes very appropriate," returned the other, dryly. "I was at a dinner the other day at the London Tavern, where 'Ye Spotted Snakes with Double Tongue,' immediately succeeded 'The Clergy.'"

At this Mr. Morrit fell into such a fit of laughter, that large tears stood in his eyes. His indignation was altogether quenched.

"Did you really hear that, Johnson? Yes, I'm sure you must have done so, for you could never have invented anything half so good. But don't let us quarrel, my good sir; we two are very old friends, Jonathan."

"'Ye Spotted Snakes with Double Tongue,'" repeated that gentleman. "What is it you are driving at, Morrit?"

"Well, Johnson, the fact is I am deeply interested in Master Fred, and in all that is likely to happen to him. I don't consider myself a dull man, and I know that he is a far cleverer fellow than I was at his age. Your pretence of his being an ordinary lad is simply ridiculous; nobody knows that better than yourself: now, I depend upon your judgment in this matter, so tell me truly what you think."

"Well, then, Morrit," returned the other, frankly, "if you want the truth, you shall have it; and, indeed, I should have thought it my duty to tell it you, in any case, before I left your roof. I perceive that his father, or you, or whoever is to have the management of that youth, will have no easy task on his hands—"

"He is a fine-hearted, high-spirited fellow," interrupted Mr. Morrit, warmly, "frank and fresh as the spring-time, open and honest as the dawn."

The other regarded this enthusiasm with much serenity, scratching his nose, and yawning, until the outbreak had subsided, and then remarked: "Of his honesty—so far as respecting other people's goods is concerned—I have no doubt; but as for his openness—"

"Ah, there you're wrong," broke in the curate; "upon his perfect candor I would stake my existence."

"Stake your stuff and nonsense!" stammered the editor. "Don't try to come over *me* with any new-fangled notions about the moral perfection of boys. Those may suit mothers very well; but in the mouth of a bachelor uncle, addressing a bachelor friend, they are simply senseless. The boy is exceedingly clever, has great fertility of thought, and genuine humor, and will, in short, be quite up to the mark of the *Porcupine*—in a year or two. But with those gifts, and doubtless much kindliness of disposition, you must be content, Morrit; for in morals, I believe Don Juan might have derived advantage from his experience, while in hypocrisy and barefaced effrontery, I know that the lad exceeds Tartuffe!"

"Tartuffe!" gasped the Rev. Robert Morrit—"my nephew exceeds Tartuffe!"

Then Mr. Jonathan Johnson bluntly delivered his reasons for suspecting that Master Frederick Galton was courting Miss Mary Perling, "a most excellent mince-pie maker, but in other respects, I should think, scarcely fitted to become your niece by marriage."

"Niece by marriage!" muttered the curate, repeating the other's words, to assure himself that his ears were not deceiving him. Then recovering himself, as by a jerk from a sort of lethargy, induced by the mere supposition of such a calamity, he added with cheerfulness: "My dear fellow, you have some exceedingly good points, but you always were a ridiculous idiot, and a ridiculous idiot you will be until the day you die."

"Very good," responded the editor, coolly. "You don't believe me. What was evidence enough for me, I suppose does not suffice for a divine, who always thinks the best of everybody, and leans by nature towards charity. Perhaps, however, you will believe the young gentleman's own handwriting. While he was reading to me a rather uninteresting narrative concerning ancient Carthage, I amused myself with turning over his other manuscripts; thrust among them, as though he had been suddenly disturbed in its composition, I found an unfinished copy of verses addressed to the young lady in question, which I am quite certain (if I do remember my own youth) were not by any means his first attempt upon this inspiring subject. He could not have written it, I am very sure, unless some of the same sort had been favorably received before. I have a pretty good memory, and I shall be delighted to repeat the poem, if you like; but you must be prepared for a little warmth of expression. You have no wish to hear it? That's a pity, too; for, for a ridiculous idiot, I am thought to have some little talent for recitation. However, you can ask him for the verses yourself; there can be no mistake about them. They are addressed to M. P.; and I was very nearly passing them over, under the impression that they were of a political character. I don't much care for the political opinions of young gentlemen of seventeen. He *is* seventeen, is he not, Morrit?"

"Barely that, if so much," groaned the curate, sinking back into the chair from which he had discharged himself like a rocket, at the first touch of these evil tidings. "What on earth should be done with such a young reprobate?"

"Well, if you ask my opinion—but there, I am only a ridiculous idiot—I should say, let the boy have change of scene and people as soon as possible. Send him to the university next month instead of in October; you will easily get them to take him in a by-term at Minim Hall; and let the young lady go home to her friends immediately."

"The artful minx shall not stay another day in the house," quoth the curate, with virtuous indignation.

"I shall be happy to take her in my fly," returned the other, grinning. "What will you give me, if I engage her young affections, and persuade her to throw your nephew overboard, eh? They say that almost all the secret service-money is expended upon persons who, by their self-sacrifice, prevent mésalliances of this kind among the aristocracy. The bishoprics are notoriously devoted as rewards for assistance of this nature."

At this moment, however, the vehicle appeared at the door, and thereby put out of the question the disinterested offer of Mr. Jonathan Johnson.

"I trust you will pass your word, Johnson, not to let this disgraceful affair be known," appealed the curate, with earnestness.

"Certainly, my good sir, certainly; but you must not mind my putting it into the *Porcupine*—in the form of story, that is. It will be so highly spiced" [the curate winced], "that nobody would ever recognize the raw materials of the thing. I live by my wits, you see, and really cannot afford to let the matter escape me altogether. Good-by, my dear fellow. I sincerely trust that everything may turn out in accordance with the interests of respectability, but if not, and the young people insist upon being married—well there, don't be angry, it's merely a supposition—I say, if they *do* insist, then be sure they send me wedding-cards and a bit of the cake. I should think," muttered the departing cynic, as the wheels crunched dully over the snow—"I should think she'd make a wedding-cake exceedingly well."

CHAPTER X.

DEPARTED.

MR. FREDERICK GALTON, whom some of his best friends would still persist in calling Master Freddy, had evil dreams on the night that Mr. Jonathan Johnson left Casterton. He tossed and tumbled restlessly upon his little bed till he got the sheets untucked at the foot, when we all know what happened; he had to rise and put things to rights, and getting warm again was not so very easy. It was impossible for an author, whose reputation was about to become European, to sink into slumber like any tired school-boy. He was eaten up with premonitions of greatness. The man who wakes to find himself famous, almost always rather anticipates the pleasant surprise overnight. When Frederick did get to sleep after his four-and-twentieth round or so with the pillow, it was only to see Fame nearer than ever. She ran beside him with a trumpet in each hand, and "Hail, thou great popular novelist!" cried she, between the flourishes—"hail, mighty poet, hail!" The winged horse seemed actually at his door, its bridle-rein held by Mary Perling, as the muse of amorous poetry, and he was about to mount it, when Mr. Jonathan Johnson appeared with a pair of enormous shears—the horrid weapons of the critic—and set to work clipping Pegasus. The noise of this operation was as the creaking of cart-wheels, insufficiently greased. He was not sure, as he sat up in his bed and listened, but that it really *was* cart-wheels, mixed with the barking of a dog; the dim gray morn was breaking, and he would have risen and looked out of the window to convince himself, but it was too cold; as it was, drowsiness overcame curiosity. Some people say there is a mysterious affinity between the souls of lovers, which will not permit the one to be ignorant of anything serious that happens to the other. This may be so in some cases, but it certainly failed in that of Master Frederick; perhaps it does not take effect until one or both the parties are of age. Otherwise, our hero would surely have been cognizant that the carrier's cart, the very chariot which had brought his goddess to Casterton, was at that moment in the act of conveying her away. His father was anxiously watching her departure from his dressing-room window. Mrs. Hartopp, in a garment composed entirely of flannel, was packing her into the vehicle. Mr. Jacob Lunes was arranging his parcels so as to offer her the least possible inconvenience. She herself was watching the white curtain behind Frederick's window, trusting to see it move, to get a wave of the hand, a motion of the head to carry away with her in her heart to comfort her. But the curtain hung unstirred as in the chamber of Death itself. Frederick Galton turned himself round, drew the bed-clothes with blind solicitude over his left shoulder, and fell fast asleep again.

Nobody called him on that Tuesday morning. Mrs. Hartopp could not trust herself even to shape the conventional statement that it was eight o'clock. He slept on till nine; and when he came down to breakfast, the doctor was already departed upon his professional tour. He was literally afraid to see his son. If he had entertained a suspicion of vice in the matter, of wrong to the poor girl, he would have sought him face to face at once, and rebuked him with words of fire. But he was convinced that Frederick had fallen in love with Mary Perling in all honor, and he dreaded to behold him while Love and Duty should be tugging in opposite directions at his heartstrings. "It is all my fault," muttered the good doctor again and again, anathematizing his own imprudence in having taken Mary into the house at all—"it is all my own fault;" so that one or two of his patients who did not feel any better that morning re-echoed the sentiment with some horror. "All your own fault, doctor? Goodness, gracious, have you been giving me the wrong medicine?"

"Far from it, madam," he would reply; "there is a decided improvement; greater activity, more firmness;" for the doctor always spoke of the subjects of his care as though they were railway shares.

But as soon as he was in his gig again, the superficial smile would fade away, and the old man would shake his head, and mutter within the folds of his double shawl: "It is all my own fault—all mine." Rarely, indeed, had he passed a more melancholy night than that which had just elapsed.

Mr. Morrit had written to say: "As soon as Fred has taken himself to bed, I must have a talk with you." And he had come and repeated the information which Mr. Jonathan Johnson had laid against the lad. The doctor never attempted to refute it: a hundred little circumstances of suspicion thronged about his brain, all stung into life by this one piece of evidence, which would else have never risen up to vex him, just as paste eels, which have lain lifeless in the dry for years, and would do so forever, will become, upon the application of a drop of water, as lively as grigs.

"I see it all now," groaned the doctor, with his head in his hands.

"I hope you do," returned his brother-in-law, drily.

Something in the tone jarred harshly upon the other's ear. "I will answer," he said, "for my son's honor with my own."

"Just what I said to Johnson about his openness," remarked Mr. Morrit, "before I learned these stubborn facts."

"He may have been—he *has* been weak; but believe me, Robert—"

"I do believe *you*," interrupted the other, grasping his hand; "but that must suffice. Let us now take nothing for granted, but make certain of the future.

That girl must go at sunrise to-morrow; I have told the carrier to call for the luggage."

"Poor girl!" sighed the doctor, tenderly.

"Yes, that is *one* objection to her," returned the curate, grimly; "she is poor, but that is by no means the worst. She is an insolvent carpenter's daughter. She has been your hired servant. I never noticed it, but I dare say she has not got an *h* to her name."

"Yet suppose Frederick insists?"

"Galton, you talk like a fool," broke forth the other, angrily. "*He* insist! What! a boy, a child? Is it possible that you can ever picture to yourself the giving way to a wicked whim of this kind, the acquiescence in his cutting his own throat at the very threshold of the world? Would you give your consent, under any circumstances imaginable, to your son's making a low marriage?"

The doctor's head was bowed; he answered nothing, but held his hand up piteously, as though he would say: "Spare me; you do not understand; you never had a son."

"Then let us hear nothing more of such vicious weakness," continued the curate. "When your son wakes to-morrow morning, and finds the girl gone, he will comprehend it all, without your having to say a word about it; or, if he wants to argue upon the subject, refer him to *me*. By Thursday night he will be at Minim Hall, for I have written to the president by this day's post, who will take him in, even though it be vacation time, for my sake. I wish he was going there to-morrow. A fortnight of Camford life will doubtless go far to eradicate this foolish passion."

Thus had the two elders settled it between them; and the girl was gone.

Master Frederick breakfasted, and lounged into the kitchen, with a passing glance into the housekeeper's room, where Mrs. Hartopp was so very busily engaged that she did not even turn her head to look at him as he went by

Mottled Sally, streaked with flour, was engaged with dough and a rolling-pin. For any delicacy of touch possessed by her, she might have been the donkey who, in the well-known advertisement, levels lawns by help of the patent roller. "Making pastry, eh, Sally?" remarked the young gentleman, with his eyes roving in vain after the beloved object.

"Only dumplings, Master Frederick; and even that is far too fine a job for me. But there, as Mrs. Hartopp says, she can't do everything; and we must get on in the best way we can, now Mary Perling's gone and left us."

"Mary gone!" cried Frederick.

"O yes, sir; she went this morning in Mr. Lunes his cart. Don't ye whirl about like that with your coat-tails, Master Frederick. Lor, if you haven't a covered yourself with flour!"

"Are they gone to the railway station?" asked the young man, impatiently, with his hand on the door-latch.

"Yes, Master Frederick; but it's too late to send anything by the cart now, for it's a-coming back by this time. La, how she did yowl, to be sure, and you never to have heard nothin' of it, though it were under your very window!"

"Yowl!" echoed the young man, passionately. "What do you mean, woman?"

"The bull-pup, sir. Mr. Lunes had tied her under the cart, this marning, for the first time, and you might have heard her atop of the Round."

A crooked smile found its way to Frederick Galton's lips; he staggered back to the lobby, and took down his coat and hat mechanically. Inside the latter was pinned a little piece of paper, with "Remember me" upon it. Under what circumstances must those few syllables have been pencilled—in what sorrow, what wretchedness! Yes, he would remember her, so help him Heaven. Nay, he would do more; he would follow her, and that directly. Oldborough, where her home lay, was only five-and-thirty miles, as the crow flew. To him, who was not a crow, it was indeed nearer fifty; but he could at least reach the railway station in time for the evening train; he knew the hour at which it started, for his love had rendered the Oldborough branch as a bough with murmuring doves upon it, and the half-page of Bradshaw which contained it was a sacred poem. He would be with her yet by the 8.45 train P.M. But this undertaking of Abelard was not to be.

"Master Frederick Galton!" said a voice that should have been familiar to him, but of whose identity, since it had never hitherto called him anything but Master Freddy, he might well have doubts—"I was directed to inform you that your father would be home at one o'clock. He went out earlier this morning, on purpose to be home to lunch with you."

The young man stood irresolutely upon the doorstep. He had never dreamed that the prospect of an interview with his own father could have filled him with such aversion and dismay.

"The doctor left this letter for you in the breakfast-room, sir; he meant to put it on the table, but being much agitated this morning, he laid it on his desk, where you did not see it."

Frederick tore open the envelope with an anxiety he took no pains to conceal.

"MY DEAR FREDERICK: I have sent Mary Perling away; no father could have done otherwise; but I do not wish to increase your sorrow by my reproaches. I feel, indeed, that I am more to blame in the matter than yourself. I shall return to-day to luncheon, and meet you as though nothing had happened. A few months hence, and we shall both be able to talk over all this with calmness. In the meantime, let us keep silence for both our sakes. By to-morrow evening you will be at the university. It would have spared me some hours of bitter sorrow, if you had been sent there six months ago, as your uncle wished. I did all for the best, as I tried to persuade myself; but I now know that I acted selfishly: I did wrong, but it was all out of my great love for you, Fred. Always your loving father,

"WILLIAM GALTON."

So there was to be no dreadful explanation after all—that was one comfort; and he was to be despatched to Camford within twenty-four hours—that was another comfort. Life in Casterton, now that Mary Perling had left it, would, he felt, be unendurable. As for giving her up, as for any final separation between him and her, such an idea never crossed his mind. He saw, indeed, that his father took it for granted; and he felt it was better so, than that they should dispute on a question upon which his whole soul answered yea to the doctor's nay. The contemplation of anything but a union with Mary, in the end, was impossible to him. He was miserable enough in its mere postponement. The sun was withdrawn from his heaven as for an arctic winter, and there was nothing for it but to wait wearily for that dawn with which comes not only day but spring, and the brief glory of the year. She seemed to have been the breath of life to him, and that in her absence he existed but by some inadequate system of artificial respiration. The leafless trees looked barer and more comfortless, now that she had gone. The robins, finishing the breakfast-crumbs which he had strewn, as usual, on the window-sill, had a less cheerful note of gratitude. He took the long, white road that led between banks of snow to "the Round," and surveyed once more that view of which Mr. Jonathan Johnson had said "it looks like Death." And now it seemed that the editor had been right. The beautiful dingle Eden, where he had first called her "dearest," lay beneath him, with its every bramble laden with snow; nor was it more altered from its summer aspect than were his present feelings from those with which he had last visited it. The very bush beneath which they two had sat together, stood out in its smooth, shining garment like a tombstone. He was very, very wretched. All the world he had ever known lay stretched beneath him for the last time; for this leave-taking, his susceptible imagination represented as a final adieu. It was a scene very dear to him; his life had hitherto passed happily in the midst of it; he would have had no desire to exchange it for Camford, or any other place, but for what had happened that morning. He had never estimated it, as it seemed, at its proper value until now. There were a score of places distinguishable to him from where he stood, notwithstanding their uniform white raiment, with each of which some pleasure was associated. It is true that they weighed nothing in comparison with that spot which I have already mentioned, hallowed by the first avowal of his love; but they helped to burden his heart. After a little, however, as his thoughts became less selfish, his face began to kindle, and his chin to cease to drop upon his chest.

"I will bring her hither as my wife," cried he, aloud: "she shall stand side by side with me upon this Round; and so shall all things here be made doubly dear to me."

CHAPTER XI.

MINIM HALL.

MINIM HALL at Camford is by no means an extensive institution. It is, as compared with most of the other royal and pious foundations of that university, as were the principality of Mentone, or the republic of San Marino, to the great European powers. It was concerning Minim Hall that the witticism was originally promulgated, that there were but three men in the college, whereof one did not speak to anybody, and the other two were not on speaking terms with each other. The men of third-rate colleges would even assert that they had never been able to discover this retired little establishment at all. But St. Boniface, whose Hall would have held all the small-college men together—St. Boniface, whose foundation is so extensive that its Fellows are found from Indus to the Pole, in all sorts of superior conditions, and one of whom, having purchased an insular property in the Caribbean Sea, but lately requested of the Seniority permission to draw his dividends a few months sooner than usual, *because he was about to levy war against a neighboring island*—St. Boniface, I say—the Leviathan—rather affected Minim Hall. It was from the former that the three undergraduates belonging to the duodecimo institution always drew their fourth man, and made up their rubber.

Of course, the excessive diminutiveness of the Hall was not without its disadvantages. The election of its chief was a hole-and-corner affair, in the hands of five persons, each of whom wished to nominate himself. Upon one occasion, they had no less than five elections without coming to any result, in consequence of this distribution of interests, when, upon the motion of one Dr. Slyboots, the final consideration of the matter was fixed for the sixteenth of the ensuing month. Now, the doctor only, of these sapient persons, was aware that the power of electing a Principal would lapse into the Chancellor's hands upon the fifteenth; so, on the previous day, he took post-horses to London, humbugged that eminent functionary in some subtle manner, and returned with the appointment in his own pocket. The electors assembled the next morning, and, as usual, arrived at no decision; but the doctor saved them all further trouble and uncertainty, by producing his credentials, and installing himself in the Principal's lodge. After this, the struggle was allowed to be between two persons only; but even then, there were strange things done in the little Republic. For example, let us suppose A and B were the two candidates. As a matter of courtesy, it is understood, on all such occasions, that B votes for A, and A for B. B is the less popular of the pair at Minim Hall, and yet he gets elected thus: No. 1 votes for A, No. 2 votes for A, and A votes for B; No. 3 votes for B, and B votes for *himself*, and becomes President. I am speaking, of course, of a state of things that has been long exploded, and did not exist even at the time when Mr. Frederick Galton went up to Minim Hall. Its Principal at that period—Dr. Hermann—would on no account have acted as B did. He was a hearty, honest gentleman, of the church-and-king and port-wine school, whose merits people are too little anxious, now-a-days, to disclose; while on the other hand, their frailties are in all the penny papers.

He respected Mr. Morrit (notwithstanding that story of the "twenty" port), as being a defender of his slowly-dying political faith, as well as the cleverest man that had ever emerged from the hallowed precincts of the hall, not excepting Mr. Jonathan Johnson, whom he deemed a revolutionary ingrate, unworthy of consideration—a democratic serpent, whom a conservative Alma Mater had nourished in her too confiding bosom.

Mr. Frederick Galton was therefore welcomed by the Principal with open arms, and received very different treatment from that experienced generally by freshmen from college dons.

The President actually took the young man for a walk on the morning after his arrival, and pointed out to him the various objects of interest in the deserted city; not, indeed, so genially as some ciceroni might have done, but still he did it. One does not expect such a great authority to be genial, and if he be even civil, it is a matter of surprise and thankfulness; as Dr. Johnson observed in respect to another matter, it is like a dog standing upon his hind-legs; he does not do it well, but one is astonished that he does it at all. Dr. Hermann did not by any means do it well, but snapped out his information in the most indigestible and disjointed form conceivable. The solemn smileless man had a habit of keeping his eyes shut, which, according to one set of college wits, accounted for his political opinions, and according to another, for his "never seeing a happy moment." Long experience, however, enabled him to calculate when he had arrived at any remarkable spot in the university.

The Principal of Minim Hall had written elaborately upon the Greek Particles, but he knew very little of men.*

As for modern literature, he had never read (for instance) Thomas Carlyle, and if he had heard of him, confused him with the notorious demagogue of the same name, and would have had him conveyed to instant execution.

He considered any man to be a fool or a rascal who advocated any opinions but his (Dr. Hermann's) own, and the language he was permitted to use in Camford Combination Rooms would not have been tolerated elsewhere.

He told some excellent stories to his young friend, upon this their first day of acquaintanceship, which he had been accustomed to tell at least four times a week for the last thirty years.

Dr. Hermann was, indeed, in many respects, as Mr. J. Johnson used irreverently to term him, "a solemn idiot:" but he was a worthy, honest gentleman for all that. The sun of prosperity had shone too long upon the stagnant waters of his life, but there was good bottom under the mud. Mr. Morrit had briefly described to him the nature of his nephew's case, without, however, compromising the family honor, we may be sure, by hinting at the position in life of Miss Mary Perling; and the old gentleman was really touched by the lad's calamity and evident mental distress. Perhaps his mind reverted to those far-back days wherein he had first wooed his own Euphemia, and had won that jewel, but not by any means worn her. The wooing of a college tutor may be often not long a-doing; but the day on which he may call the beloved one "wife," may be distant a quarter of a century. He may court a maiden with hair as black as the raven's wing, and wed her when its hue is that of the owl. If she had but the gift of foresight, she might even marry somebody else in the meanwhile, and be a widow ready for his unchanged affections by the time when the college living falls vacant, and permits him to claim her, or the mastership of the college becomes his portion, and he is enabled to strike off the chains of celibacy with extraordinary pomp.

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* "Is it possible this author would have had us print it μεν?"—*Chorus of Printers' Devils.*

One of the really most romantic views of a great college is taken from this stand-point; dismiss the historical associations connected with it altogether—the musty, fusty memories of mathematicians and philosophers who have long since been dust—and fix your gaze upon the great army of female martyrs who are so wistfully regarding its slow vicissitudes. These betrothed virgins—for widows have not the requisite patience—the young, the middle-aged, and even the somewhat advanced in years, turn daily their anxious eyes upon the *Times* for the obituaries and the preferments; they charitably rejoice when an old gentleman is relieved of his earthly burden, or removed at last "to a more extended sphere of usefulness," by getting a living, for each of these changes is a step which brings them nearer to their beloved.

When Death beckons a rector to leave the pulpit for the vaults beneath, Hymen is beckoning to some other member of the same religious society to come to the altar. While the widow is packing up and leaving the rectory in tears, the bride is thinking it high time she should be gone, and putting on the white garments and wreath of orange-flowers that ought to have been donned years ago.

In the gift of Minim Hall, there were but two livings, and one evil-spoken-of perpetual curacy, which nobody could be got to take, so that Dr. Hermann had had to wait for his Euphemia for many years: and it was whispered in Combination Room—which, however, to say the truth, could scarcely be worse in the matter of scandal even if female Fellows *were* admitted to them—that, after all, the doctor would willingly be off his bargain.

To have such patient virtue rewarded by a shrew at last, was indeed sad enough; but perhaps the very waiting had done it. Like the genie in the bottle, which the fisherman nets in the *Arabian Nights*, the milk of human kindness may have turned in Euphemia by reason of the long delay: for the first five years, she may have had the best intentions of being a perfect consort; for the next five, she may have determined to have been at least not worse than other men's wives; in the third lustrum (when she took to caps), she got to brood over her wrongs; and during the fourth and last, it is possible she made up her mind, that when she did become Mrs. Hermann, the doctor should smart for it.

It was, however, of his days of wooing that the Principal of Minim Hall was reminded by the advent of the young Freshman, and his heart was stirred with divine pity, which can even touch the souls of college dons. Fred's case was a really pitiable one. His animal spirits, and natural desire to make himself agreeable, increased by his sense of the doctor's kindness, sustained him while he was talking or listening, but if left to himself even for a minute, he relapsed into a lethargy of woe. His imagination was in Eden, his heart was in Oldborough, and it was only the body and bones of him which were wandering about Camford streets in company with the venerable Principal of Minim Hall.

To any new-comer into a town which is to be his future home, it seems, for a day or two, as though the streets, the buildings, the churches, will never become familiar to him, although in a week's time it will be impossible to recall the sense of strangeness which they at first produced; but Frederick Galton could hardly be said to have seen Camford at all.

The cloistered courts of the colleges, made vaster even than usual by the absence of their inhabitants, the carven bridges, linking lawn with lawn across the sluggish stream, the lime-tree avenues, the echoing dining-halls, and all the characteristic features of the place flashed for a moment upon his outward eyes, and straightway vanished. If he had been transported from the place forever at the conclusion of his second day there, his recollection of it, in spite of the distinguished patronage under which it was presented to him, would have been confined almost solely to Minim Hall. "The University of Camford," he would have replied, if questioned, "consists of two exactly parallel rows of buildings, placed in an enormous space, and wanting the other two sides that should make up its square. During my visit to this interesting locality (which it is fair to say happened in vacation-time), there were no persons occupying the various suits of apartments into which these blocks are divided; but in full term-time there are said to be no less than three under-graduates in residence, beside the officials—namely, the Principal, the Vice-Principal, the Dean, the Tutor, and the Bursar; but the last four offices (with some others) are discharged by the same individual. The chapel is an elegant structure, capable of containing all the members of Minim Hall that ever existed, or ever shall do so, calculating the annual influx of *alumni* at one per annum—which is the average for the last hundred years, etc."

The Vice-Principal, Dean, Tutor, and Bursar was snipe-shooting in Norfolk, so that, if Dr. Hermann had not invited Frederick to his hospitable board, the young man would have dined alone, and afterwards, probably, invested Minim Hall with a ghostly interest forever by hanging himself in the spacious wilderness upon which the windows of its combination room abut. Instead of this, however, the solitary freshman was entertained at "the Lodge," by the Principal and Euphemia. "You see we are quite in the family way, young man," observed that lady, in apology for the humble fare, which consisted of four most excellent courses and a pine-apple; "but there is absolutely nothing to be got in Camford during vacation-time." This was a stereotyped phrase of the lady's whenever she had provided something better than common for her table, notwithstanding she had once received for answer: "It is not good, madam, but it will *do*," from our friend, Mr. Jonathan Johnson. That original and rather rude response gave him a reputation in Camford for years, but it excluded him from the Lodge at Minim Hall forever. The truth is, that Euphemia herself was not in her heart of hearts a hospitable person; but her lord was her master in the matter of viands; he could put up with a great deal of snubbing, and he did, but it was dangerous to under-feed him.

The caged lion is meek enough, and will perform almost any part at the beck of its keeper; but let the man beware how he tampers with the culinary arrangements of that noble creature! The doctor had parted with his birthright as the superior animal, but it was not for a mess of pottage. There was a tacit understanding that soup and fish, and flesh and fowl, ay, and eke dessert, were to be set before him daily; otherwise, the standard of revolt would assuredly be raised.

By these means, the Principal of Minim Hall always procured guests, who, in prospect of a less sumptuous banquet, would perhaps have been deterred by the presence of Euphemia.

Phemy—as she was called, by elision, in the Combination Rooms—was not popular in the university. She was tall, high-cheeked, bony, and considered herself to have a mission to repress immorality. Mr. Jonathan Johnson (but this was after war had been openly declared between the lady and himself) used to aver that nature had intended her for a Scotch gamekeeper, and even went so far as to draw fancy sketches of her (for private circulation) in Caledonian costume. She was in reality more like a lady-abbess, as pictured by an Exeter Hall artist, and would have enjoyed that part of her professional duties, which included bricking-up-alive the erring, most amazingly. Being Protestant, however, to the backbone (of which she had plenty), she ought to have been an old maid, and kept a school. How she would have watered the milk, and thinned the currants in the puddings, and confiscated to domestic purposes the parcels from home! She was a woman, however, still, in spite of Mr. Johnson's insinuations to the contrary, and Master Frederick Galton's youth and good looks were not without their effect upon her. She did not know that his tender melancholy arose from a misplaced attachment to a young person out at service. She was very affable to him on the evening of his arrival, when the three dined together. She asked after his mother, and upon learning that he had none, assured him of her genuine sympathy, for that she also was motherless; which, indeed, it was high time that she should be. She would have put her napkin to her eye, upon making this affecting statement, but upon perceiving that it was a clean one, she thought better of it, and produced her pocket-handkerchief, which was not open to the same objection; but the opportunity and the tear had both passed away by that time, so she only blew her nose. She was always ready to perform that operation, being one of that extensive class of females who are never without a cold in their heads.

In the course of the repast, she confided to her young guest how much of everything of which he had partaken had cost; and informed him generally what an expensive establishment she had to keep up, and what a great responsibility she had. It was not an intellectual conversation, but since she did all the talking, and what she said required very little attention, Frederick was well content. His mind was far away from Mrs. Hermann's statistics, and she was gratified to observe that his appetite was extremely moderate. There would be all the more to be hashed next day, when he would be "company" no longer, and there would be no necessity for any display. But in this matter she had reckoned without the host.

"I have asked Mr. and Miss De Lernay to meet our young friend to-morrow, my dear," observed the doctor, when half a bottle of excellent sherry had encouraged him to make confession.

"Indeed!" returned the lady, stiffly. "They dined here last week. I wonder (sarcastically) that they don't get tired of dining here."

"If they did, I suppose they would not come, my dear. The fact is, Mr. Galton, I want you to know them, for until the men come up you will find it dull enough up here. Monsieur de Lernay belongs to Minim Hall, and is, like yourself, but an under-graduate."

"The Principal is ridiculous!" ejaculated Mrs. Hermann, sharply.

"What principle is ridiculous? What does this foolish woman mean?" thought Frederick to himself. It was very fortunate, however, that he did not assent to her proposition, as his indifference prompted him to do; for whenever Euphemia was displeased with her husband, she was accustomed to refer to him in the third person, as "the Principal." "The Principal is wrong; the Principal is incredible; the Principal is absurd"—a habit which sometimes led strangers into the most unintentional rudeness towards the worthy doctor.

"The explanation of the matter is this," observed the host, with heightened color:—"Monsieur de Lernay is as old as I, or"—he was about to add, "as Mrs. Hermann;" but his courage was not equal to his indignation—"as old as I, or I am much mistaken; but he entered nominally, last year, as an under-graduate. He does not live in college, but with his daughter Eugenie, a most charming young lady, in the town. He wishes to perfect himself in classical attainments—a most creditable ambition—and has therefore taken up his residence at Camford. A French nobleman, whom misfortunes and an attachment to his legitimate sovereign have driven from his native country, he is, of course, received among us with open arms; and still more so, as you will easily believe when you see her, is the charming Eugenie."

"The Principal is indecorous in the extreme!" exclaimed the lady of the house.

"Not at all, madam—not at all," rejoined the doctor, who was growing bolder with every glass. "In a town where there is little female society, like Camford, a beautiful, young, and accomplished lady is a welcome addition, indeed, to our social gatherings. I mentioned to Monsieur de Lernay that you were alone here, and he at once expressed a wish for an opportunity of making your acquaintance.—Let us have the Ruffs and Reeves, my dear, and then we shall have a pleasant entertainment."

The Ruffs and Reeves were not additional guests, as Frederick at the time imagined, but some birds peculiar to the locality, and very excellent eating, which were at that time hanging in the doctor's larder.

"Have you any further orders to communicate?" inquired the lady, rising to leave the table. She spoke with asperity, but not with unmitigated defiance, for she knew it was the doctor's hour of might—the after-dinner hour—that one twenty-fourth part of their combined existence wherein his will was law.

"Nothing, my dear—nothing," was the bland reply. "The salad and the horse-radish sauce for the beef will, I know, be intrusted to no less skilful hands than your own."

Within five minutes from the disappearance of his better-half, the doctor was fast asleep, with a napkin over his blooming countenance; while his youthful guest, with eyes sadly fixed upon the fire, was pondering upon the wretchedness of human life.

CHAPTER XII.

MONSIEUR DE LERNAY.

MANY social luxuries, however harmless in themselves, have this disadvantage, that it is often inexpedient to indulge in them. The Indian princes, who, a few years ago, were the lions of a London season, complained bitterly that they were not permitted to hamstring their own attendants, but were compelled to wait until their departure from this miscalled land of liberty, when the amiable caprice might have altogether died away. The custom of relieving the mind by interjections, or, in other words, by profane swearing, is open to the same objection; so is that of reciting pieces from the dramatists, which seems to be almost a necessity with some individuals; so is that of smoking—even the most delicate tobacco being excluded from many places, such as the family-pew; and so, also—to take a very common case, indeed—is the habit of going to sleep after dinner. Nothing can be pleasanter in itself, or less objectionable, one would think, to others: the body is in complete repose, the handkerchief over the face almost suggestive of the last long repose of all, indeed, but for the defiant breathing which generally accompanies this luxury; the mind is at ease; the spiritual essences, if any, are untaxed and dormant; the digestion only is at work. And yet this harmless and delightful state of things cannot always be indulged in. When you go out to dinner, unless the whole of the party (males) are addicted to the custom, and prepared to go to sleep likewise—which under the present and imperfect system of affairs, almost never happens—you *must* keep awake after the banquet. If you are yourself the host, this is still more incumbent on you, and especially if you have but few guests. With one man, indeed—if there is no particular reason for being civil to him—you can say: "Excuse me, while I just take forty winks;" and if you have a greater revenue *per annum* than he—which I am supposing to be the case—he will never venture to disturb you.

When I was a young fellow of sixteen or so, I had once the honor—in the capacity of nephew to one of the parties—of dining alone with two very funded persons, the one being a railway director, and the other a governor of the Bank of England. They were equally rich, and consequently very courteous to one another, although not particularly so to me. After dinner, the conversation was carried on by fits and starts, as each woke up from a few delicious seconds of unconsciousness to a sense of his indecorous conduct. At last the guest took courage to observe, that he could not think what made him so drowsy that evening unless it was the wind being in the south-east. "My very dear sir," returned the host with rapture, "the south-east wind has the very same effect in my case. Now, if you like just to take a little nap, don't mind *me*." In half a minute after this most satisfactory explanation, the happy pair were snoring like a couple of grampuses; and I had finished the second bottle of port and all the walnuts before they woke up, and simultaneously exclaimed "that they did not know when they had last done such a thing as to go to sleep after dinner—certainly not for years."

In the case of the Principal of Minim Hall, we have seen that the presence of his freshman did not in the least deter him from his post-prandial slumber; he had muttered some indistinct apology with "unusually fatigued" in it, and gone off like a lamb, having decently covered his face with a napkin. But upon the next evening there was no such luck for Dr. Hermann. M. de Lernay was not a man to be affected by the south-east wind, nor to make allowance for people who were affected by it; he was a wit, he was a *raconteur;* he had had the most extraordinary experiences of men, and, indeed, of women also, and he was not backward in relating them. He spoke English excellently well, with only just so much of accent as gave to his remarks a sort of piquant simplicity that was irresistible. Mr. Frederick Galton found such a pleasure in listening to him as he had not imagined his desolated existence could be capable of entertaining. He was charmed out of himself and his grief, held by the glittering eye and facile tongue cf the French nobleman. M. de Lernay was of the blood of Clovis, that was certain. Frederick did not quite know how he had become aware of this circumstance; whether it had been cursorily alluded to by M. de Lernay himself, or stated in a confidential aside by Dr. Hermann; but he would have made affidavit of the fact with cheerful promptitude. There was an affectionate candor about the Frenchman which could not be resisted; the confidences of a youth of Frederick's own age could not have been more natural than were those of his new acquaintance; nor his lightheartedness more unaffected and complete if he had been in years the undergraduate of a year's standing, which he was in the books of the college. And yet M. de Lernay must have been—forty, fifty, sixty—it was impossible to say what age. Forty, to judge by his appearance; sixty and more when you listened to his personal experiences. He could recall the entrance of his beloved master, Louis XVIII., into Paris. He pictured the pale Duchess d'Angoulême sitting by that monarch's side, but untriumphant, sick with the memories of the past—her own long imprisonment, and the murder of her unhappy mother—in a manner that well-nigh affected the Principal of Minim Hall to tears; how much more, then, the impressionable Frederick! With the Count d'Artois—afterwards Charles X.—M. de Lernay had been hand and glove; he spoke of him as Clarendon might have discoursed of his royal master. The topic of courts seemed to elevate his style above that of a mere narrator. Once only did he give any sign of the mere partisan; the young man had asked some question relative to

Louis Philippe, and a scowl came down upon the Frenchman's smiling face like a thunder-cloud in a summer sky.

It was not easy to excite the interest of the Principal of Minim Hall, whose thoughts, naturally sluggish, were generally pre-occupied with the sense of his own importance; but he paid tribute, in "the hushed amaze of hand and eye," to the conversational powers of his alien guest. He had been accustomed for so many years to the talk of men of his own calibre, most potent, grave, and reverend seniors of the university, that he was taken by storm by the brilliancy and vigor of this man, who, compared to those natures, was as an electric eel to carp, or rather, perhaps, to those lethargic gold-fish, which circumnavigate their little globe of glass so unremittingly under the impression that that is the world.

Even Mrs. Hermann herself wore a look of satisfaction, as though she felt that M. de Lernay was honorably liquidating his dinner obligations; and ever and anon she turned a triumphant eye to Frederick, as though she would have said: "What a treat is this that has thus been gratuitously provided for you!"

The fifth person present at that table was not behind the rest in acknowledging the enchanter's power. Miss de Lernay listened to her father with an attentive interest, such as a British Paterfamilias can seldom, indeed, obtain for his twice-told tales, from the members of his family. She *must* have heard some of them before; his stock of recollections could not possibly have been inexhaustible and ever new. He could not have improvised his stories, and spun them spider-like—to use Mr. Jonathan Johnson's metaphor—out of his own interior; no literary stomach, not even that of the prolific Mr. Sala—could have stood it. Yet there she sat, rapt in the paternal reminiscences, as though they had never met her ear before. Her face, naturally very pale, was tinged with the rose, her hazel eye aglow with excitement—the very picture of beauty enthralled. Mr. Frederick Galton observed that she was beautiful, and that was all. The chamber of the heart in which we keep the lovely images of the softer sex was, in his case, entirely pre-occupied by a very different, although, perhaps, no less exquisite creature. The English primrose is a flower that may well hold its own, even when compared with the lily of France.

M. de Lernay was not displeased that the loveliness of his daughter was unable to distract the young man's attention from his own conversation. He took it as a great compliment to his genius. He did not know that the affections of the youth were pre-engaged, nor, if he had been told, would he have believed that such a circumstance could have greatly altered the matter. The French courtier did not put faith in the fidelity of the young. He had not, perhaps, a great deal of faith in anything—except in M. Lernay; although this was by no means offensively conspicuous. He paid every deference to the prejudices of the Doctor of Divinity, and the presumed innocence of the juvenile Frederick. He had the faculty of becoming instinctively aware of the opinions of those among whom he found himself, and however opposite to these his own might be, they were never suffered to clash with them. If he had chanced to meet with an advocate of cannibalism, he would probably have detected some common ground of agreement in taste, and certainly evolved many original, and therefore valuable facts, to form the raw material for future conversation. When he discovered that Mr. Frederick Galton entertained Republican sentiments—which he himself detested infinitely more than cannibalism—he had nothing more severe to remark than that he had never yet met any young man of really great promise who did not lean towards democracy. It was the divine yearning of youth, as yet untrammelled by conventionalities, after universal goodwill.

"Well, I was a Tory myself," observed the doctor, "from the first moment that I began to think at all."

For one instant there flashed across the Frenchman's face a gleam of cynical humor, that made itself reflected in the face of Frederick; and this completed his victory over the young man, who keenly felt the compliment of being credited with a more lively intelligence than the Principal of Minim Hall. Then M. de Lernay gravely explained, that in the particular case of Dr. Hermann's youth, which could not, of course, have been otherwise than promising, early study had enabled him to draw solid historical deductions, while other young folks were building theirs with unstocked brains.

There was a rustle of silk, and the ladies rose to depart. As Frederick opened the door for them, he read in the smileless bow of the younger that there was a third person aware of the sarcasm passed upon the doctor, and that she did not admire the supple readiness with which he had enlisted himself against his host. There are few faces which can exhibit at a glance reproof, contempt, and disappointment for the shortcomings of one of whom we have formed a better opinion, but Frederick Galton could read all these in that one look of Eugenie de Lernay. The color flew to his cheek, as it will do with the knowledge of having committed a baseness, in those who are not used to such things; and it was a comfort to him to see that she perceived it, and was already sorry for the necessity that had thus brought blood upon a skin so sensitively tender.

It was strange that so devoted a daughter should have been the case of depreciation of her parent; but from that moment Frederick began to regard M. de Lernay with considerably less admiration. Hazel was a fine color—although not, indeed, so tender as blue—and of what a depth of expression was it capable! Mary Perling's eyes could never have shot forth such a glance as that; though, indeed, why should they?—the dear eyes that were only intended to give him love for love.

Mons. de Lernay, as though he had divined these thoughts, fell to talking of feminine beauty. He politely maintained that, charming as were the ladies of his own land, there was more true beauty in England than in France.

"We have Miss de Lernay in England, now," observed the doctor, gallantly, "so that the balance at present may very well be on our side."

"I have never been abroad," replied Frederick, "but I have always understood that for beauty the Spanish ladies bore away the bell from all. I have seen gipsies at fairs and feasts in our own county, who, but for a lack of refinement, would be the most beautiful creatures I can imagine; and are not Spaniards a sort of refined gipsies?"

"They are all alike," returned the other, contemptuously. "Among a score of Spanish women a Spaniard could scarcely recognize his own wife—a fact which should be some extenuation for the reputed looseness of morals in the Peninsula. All conventional notions of foreign female beauty—and I have had some little experience," grinned the Frenchman—"I believe to be quite false and ill-founded."

"But surely," urged Frederick, laughing, "I am to take for granted what my 'Pinnock's Geography' tells me, and in which all rudimentary ethnological authorities agree, that Circassia contains the loveliest of the sex, and Constantinople—"

For the second time that evening, a scowl came over the Frenchman's face that was terrible to look upon, and the young man stopped involuntarily; at the same time, the heel of the doctor, at whose left hand he sat, came down upon his foot with unmistakable energy. A stupid youth would have halloed out: "Don't kick me, Dr. Hermann!" a shy one would have remained speechless, under the consciousness of having somehow committed himself beyond redemption; but Frederick contrived to conclude his sentence carelessly enough with the remark, that "to whatever nation they might belong, admiration was probably equally acceptable to all females."

"Not only acceptable, but necessary and essential to their happiness," observed M. de Lernay. "Even when it would seem to be a totally hopeless undertaking to bid for the favor of man, a woman never despairs. I will tell you of a very curious example of this, which came under my own knowledge when I was a young student in Paris. At that period, masks were very much in fashion, and not only was this the case at public entertainments, but even at private houses it was usual to give masked balls. The greatest vigilance had, of course, to be exercised on entrance, where each person was compelled to show his or her card of invitation, and also to write down their names; but the respectability of the company being thus assured, such parties had certainly a greater piquancy than those at which you knew everybody at first sight. Great cleverness was often exhibited in concealing one's identity, and detecting that of others; while, in the case of strangers, it was not unusual for a couple who had made themselves very agreeable to one another, to unmask, that each might become acquainted with the features of so charming a partner. This was, of course, effected in some secluded corner, or behind a pillar; and it was understood that if the parties should meet on any future occasion, it should rest with the lady to make recognition of the gentleman, or not, as she pleased. These disclosures were in rare instances not a little disappointing; but I am thankful to say that in my youth I possessed a sort of instinct for beauty which never led me to throw away my attention upon objects that were unworthy of it, except in one remarkable instance.

"I had met a certain blue velvet mask at least half-a-dozen times, and had always found her particularly lively and agreeable. She had a ringing musical laugh, which thrilled through me like the song of a bird, and certified at least, that my unknown partner was young and light-hearted. I knew, too, she must be well-connected, since I met her at the best houses in my visitinglist, and it was not so easy to go everywhere in Paris as it is now. She danced most exquisitely, and had evidently the nicest ear for music. But the provoking part of her was, that I could not get her to unmask. Upon my second meeting, I had indiscreetly gone the length of unmasking myself; but, although I had no reason to imagine that she was otherwise than pleased (for, alas! I was as well favored as is this young gentleman here, in those days), she would by no means reciprocate the compliment. I do not say that I was in love with one whom I had never seen, but I was greatly piqued at her obstinacy, which caused me to devote myself to her all the more. One evening, at the hotel of the Spanish ambassador, the sprightliness and wit of my incognita were more irresistible than ever. We had got to talk of all kinds of subjects by this time, and even to continue a conversation at the point at which we left it off at our last meeting.

"Her information was deep and various, considering her tender years, which I was convinced—and rightly, as it turned out—could not much exceed seventeen, and her judgment singularly logical. Upon this occasion, she well nigh drove me mad, because she would not condescend to show the reality of that countenance, about which I had made so many rapturous guesses. In the end, we quarrelled about it. I had the madness to protest, upon the word of a gentleman, that I would never speak to her again after that night, if she did not unmask. I could see that this affected her powerfully, and therefore I repeated the threat with even greater emphasis.

"'Then,' replied she, with an inexpressible melancholy; 'we shall never converse again, for I have sworn to myself that you shall never look upon my face.'

"It was impossible to doubt her determination, and I was exceedingly sorry that my importunity had brought matters to such a crisis. 'Stay,' cried I; 'I vowed I would never speak to you again if you did not unmask;

I did not say, unless I saw your face. You can turn your back to me, and uncover your features without my seeing them, and thus both our resolves will be kept, and yet we shall not lose each other's society, which in *my* case (for men were polite in those days) would be equivalent to a death doom.'

"We were quite alone when I spoke this. She stepped from me some ten paces, so that I could not have secured her domino, had I intended such a breach of good manners, turned her back to me, and unmasked. I thought I should have swooned upon the spot. Luckily my own mask was on, which prevented my features from exhibiting the disgust at what I beheld, and which it was impossible they could have concealed.

"I had made my proposition to the poor girl because there was an immense mirror at the end of the apartment, which, as she had her back to it while she spoke, she had not herself perceived. I foresaw that I should see the reflection of her countenance quite clearly, and, ah Heaven! I did. It is unnecessary to shock you with the description of what was, indeed, most horrible. She replaced her mask, and turned towards me, and then, although I did not speak, or betray myself in any way, as I thought, and though, as I have said, I was masked, she perceived that I knew her secret, and dropped insensible on the floor. A crowd of course collected: but I would not suffer any one to remove her domino; and presently two ladies, who were her relations, came up, and taking her into their charge, carried her off from the ball."

"But what was the matter?" inquired the Principal and the Freshman in the same breath.

"The poor girl's countenance was such as your poet Moore describes as belonging to the false prophet Mokanna; and I really felt exceedingly like Zelica when she took her first look at it. I afterwards learnt her history. Her countenance had been mutilated by some terrible disease, which had attacked her almost in infancy, and she had undergone with marvellous fortitude the most frightful operations, with scarcely any benefit. At eleven years of age it was impossible that she could appear in public except masked, and yet she had the greatest longing for society and amusements of all kinds. She had taught herself drawing by watching, through a glass door, the lessons imparted to her sisters. The love of admiration in women could scarcely be more powerfully illustrated than in the case of this unhappy girl."

"And what became of the poor young creature eventually?" inquired Frederick.

"She died, sir: she danced no more; she was consumed, I fear, by a hopeless passion for myself," replied the Frenchman, sighing.—"What Madeira is this, Dr. Hermann? It is a wine we seldom get in such perfection in France."

As is the case with most great conversationalists, there was a secret chamber in M. de Lernay's mind, from which he delighted to bring forth hideous skeletons, and dangle them in chains before his terrified but entranced little audiences. The door being once opened for the above recital, a troop of other horrors followed upon its heels, and all professing to be part of the personal experience of the narrator himself. This is perhaps—singular as it may appear to ladies—the most seductive sort of after-dinner talk; for all of us males, no matter what our other tastes may be, entertain a liking for such subjects, and are very ready to believe that life is not, after all, so commonplace a matter as it seems, but that tragedy is to be found everywhere, even in omnibuses—as in the late Mr. Greenacre's case, who carried his wife's head in a handkerchief for a considerable distance, in one of those public conveyances.

So enthralling did M. de Lernay prove, in the capacity of Shocking Story-teller, that Euphemia sent in twice, in vain, to let the gentlemen know that tea was awaiting them in the drawing-room: the third summons being imperative, and having something of the nature of an ultimatum, was reluctantly obeyed.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE YOUNG SQUIRE.

OF the four hundred and odd young gentlemen who matriculate at Camford yearly, I wonder what proportion expect to distinguish themselves in the eyes of Alma Mater. We know by the university calendar that about one-third of these attain what are believed by their friends to be mathematical and classical honors. But what, after all, is a *junior op.* in the former list, or a *third-class* in the latter? In the eyes of the Master of St. Boniface, we know, "it is only to have escaped disgrace;" and indeed they are not exalted positions, save in the opinion of mothers, sisters, and beloved objects. One or two hard readers may sometimes slip down into those lower regions by accident, as one or two great geniuses may be found elevated into them—rapt into the honor list, almost contrary to their own expectations—but upon the whole, we must hold the company there to be but mediocre. Confining success, therefore, to the first classes in each department, it may be calculated that not more than one-fifth of the men who come up to Camford do credit to themselves in the great university fight, and satisfy their backers. It is not to be supposed, however, that the remaining four-fifths are disappointed men. The majority of these never intended to read for honors at all; some, because they are aware that Providence has put the temptation of being unduly elevated by intellectual distinctions out of their power, and others for want of any ambition whatever in that direction. All these are well content with "the poll," or ordinary degree. A few have not even the humble goal of becoming a Bachelor of Arts in view.

Lord Fitzperiwinkle and his noble friends, on their arrival at college, behold a couple of university years before them undimmed by a single cloud in the way of examinations. Camford demands of them "no little go," being content with the warrant of their splendid lineage. After nourishing them in her bosom for seven terms, she will make their final exit as easy for them as possible, and dub them Masters of Arts upon the spot, to which title those of meaner birth cannot attain under three times that period. Their lordships, therefore, need have little in view beyond the vista of enjoyment. Young Limpet, again, the sporting fishmonger's son, has little in view but their lordships themselves. He came up to Camford for a degree indeed, but it is neither that of Bachelor nor of Master, and far less that of Doctor of Divinity; it is the degree Social which he is in quest of. He wishes to rub off his fishmonger's scales by contact with Fitzperiwinkle and the rest of them. His natural inclination for this course of conduct is strengthened by the paternal admonition. Limpet, senior (in whose eye money has still some value, although it is popularly said to be "no object" to him), has paid double entrance-fees for the lad, and is prepared to pay double everything throughout his university career, in order that he may have greater opportunities for cultivating the acquaintance of the nobility. He enters Limpet, junior, as a fellow-commoner, buys a gown for him, wonderful to behold, blue, and bespangled with stars like the firmament itself, and a cap that is appropriate to the same. More fishmongers, grocers, tailors, and other respectable persons do the like.

Some have not chosen to invest so large a capital in their offspring, but have entered them as pensioners only, as mere country gentlemen, clergymen, and others are content to do; in which case they cannot, of course, look for such satisfactory returns. But the object of the majority of this class is the same—namely, the forming of what they call a "fashionable connection"—a phrase taken directly out of their annual circulars. Another set of freshmen, who have no ulterior views connected with the senate-house, are wealthy scapegraces, whom their parents or guardians know not what to do with, but send them up to Camford, as being upon the whole the safest place for their vagaries—the softest spot that can be selected for the catastrophe, when the expected overturn does take place.

A few young lunatics, who desire to embrace some calling, such as literature, or going to sea, of which they will perceive the absurdity in a year or two, are sent up to the university for the purpose of distracting their thoughts. And to these must be added one or two who, like Mr. Frederick Galton, have fixed their immature affections upon some ineligible female, the recollection of whom it is hoped that Alma Mater will eradicate.

Finally, there are always some young gentlemen of good family and position, whom nature has nevertheless persistently attached to rat-catching and other ignoble pursuits of the like nature, and who are consigned to the university in order to acquire a "gentlemanly tone;" and to this class, in the year of which we write, Mr. John Meyrick, junior, of the Grange, Casterton, Downshire, most unquestionably belonged. Although a year older than his companion Frederick, young Meyrick was still a schoolboy in mind and behavior, and by no means in a very smooth condition for receiving Camford polish. He was dictatorial, bearish, and obstinate; he shrank from the society of his equals in birth, because he knew that they would in all other respects be his superiors. However, Mr. Meyrick, senior, might affect to despise Frederick Galton, he was not unaware of the humanizing influence which that young gentleman had hitherto exercised upon his son. He had long made up his mind that when the former went to college the latter should accompany him; and certain circumstances which had occurred subsequent to Frederick's departure had caused the squire to put his determination into immediate effect.

No sooner had the doctor's son been despatched to Minim Hall than his late companion at Casterton began to experience an insupportable ennui. His horse remained idly in the stall, for he had nobody to ride races with him on the Downs, and his coursing-matches had lost half their interest, now that he could not exhibit his superior sagacity—for Bill and Bob unhappily knew much more upon the subject than he did.

This is a drawback incidental to all amateur sporting: a gentleman jock may have an excellent seat, but never so good a one as the professional. The best rider in the hunting-field is generally the one that is there to sell his horse. The lord of the manor may be a good shot, but his keeper is a better, although he may be too judicious to disclose the fact; while as for the scientific fisherman, with his pocket-book full of supernaturally attractive flies, there's not a poacher, in the stream he whips with his thirty-guinea rod, but can catch, with an original outlay of five shillings, two fish for his one.

Still, Bill and Bob were all that were now left to the young gentleman, and he was inseparable from one or other of them all day.

In the evening, too, he fled from the drawing-room of the Grange, and sought them in the saddle-room. It seemed better to him there to reign than to serve, or at least to play second fiddle to papa, in the more gorgeous apartment.

From the saddle-room there was generally an adjournment to the *Meyrick Arms.* Our Tony Lumpkin was unfortunate in this his favorite house of entertainment, inasmuch as it was a very sorry one. If the wicked Buckingham had ended his days at Casterton, the bitter lines in which his memory is chiefly preserved could scarcely have been written. "In the worst inn's worst room," would have been a worse exaggeration even than it really is, for there is but one inn in the village, and that had but one room in it. In that apartment, however, assembled the chief "spirits" of the neighborhood, who had generally spent the day in the dry skittle-alley attached to the premises. The conversation may not have been edifying, but it was not displeasing to the young squire—no, not even when it happened to have for its topic that little love-episode between his friend and Miss Mary Perling.

If the wily curate really intended to keep that matter quiet, he must have been sanguine indeed; and we may well imagine, without it being described, how tenderly the "spirits" touched upon an event so romantic.

The distance between the Grange and the *Meyrick Arms* was considerable; in going to the latter place, the nearer way was unquestionably across the fields at the back of the mansion; but in returning, the village street was found to possess that advantage. This curious circumstance arose from the fact that Mr. John Meyrick, junior, was wont to start tolerably sober, but to come back more or less intoxicated, in which condition the footway over the fields, being narrow and winding, was difficult to keep.

On one particular occasion the young squire and Bob, the stable "help," had imbibed very much more than was good for them. They had drowned in the flowing bowl not only care, but commonest prudence; and yet, despite the solemn and reiterated warnings of their boon-companion Bill, who, being aware of his own diagonal tendency, kept to the village street, they attempted to return home by the fields.

The night was not dark, but the ditches were many, and the lofty stiles all leaned, or seemed to lean, towards them, so that their advance was tardy in the extreme; moreover, every obstacle was set down by each as having been artfully contrived by the other, and not, as was in truth the case, by the arts of husbandry and irrigation.

The most revengeful and malicious feelings were thus naturally, however unreasonably, excited in both their breasts. A weighty hedge-stake, which had once formed the angle of a sheepfold, stuck in the field by the wayside, suggested to the mind of Mr. John Meyrick, junior, who was walking in the rear, that it would be a capital weapon wherewith to avenge himself upon his enemy; having, therefore, with considerable difficulty pulled it out of the ground, he trailed it cunningly behind him, with the intention, when he should get near enough, of hitting Bob with it, as hard as he possibly could, on the back of his head. This design, though ingeniously conceived, he had not the intelligence to execute. He was unable, upon Bob's unexpectedly turning round, to conceal this monstrous club with his body, or to throw into his countenance such an air of careless innocence as might have dissipated suspicion. On the contrary, the formidable stable-help made at him furiously at once, exclaiming: "Oh! you would, would you, you young varmint?" and did so beat him, then and there, with the bludgeon that had been provided for his own destruction, that he left the incipient squire battered and prone on the turnip-field, arriving at his quarters over the stables an hour or two later, with the hedge-stake, and in the most excellent spirits. So far, however, from participating in his triumph, William, the groom, who had passed the time since he had parted with his young master in no little anxiety, immediately knocked Bob down, locked him up in the coach-house (where he lay for some hours under the gravest suspicions of having committed an unnatural murder), and roused the house. A search being instituted, Mr. John Meyrick, junior, was discovered upon his back, addressing the turnip-tops in a humorous but disconnected speech, under the impression that he was still at the public-house among his friends. There was not much physical harm done after all, but the moral shock communicated to the Grange was very considerable. Although Mr. Meyrick, senior, was, considering his social position, not only an uneducated but an absolutely illiterate man, his family pride revolted against low company. Though he somewhat shrank from the society of those of his own rank and large possessions in the county, he had never sought that of his inferiors, and there had always been a proper distance observed by the Bills and Bobs of his youth. Mrs. Meyrick, too, although she could not believe that her son had ever taken an over-abundance of liquor in his life, and opined that his conduct upon the occasion in question had been traduced by calumniators, and his precious life all but destroyed by a bloodthirsty assassin, still perceived that the sooner dearest John should associate with his compeers, the nobility and gentry of England, at the university, the better. His frankness, his freedom from pride, and the charming sociality of his disposition would, she foresaw, be so many sources of danger to him, so long as he resided at Casterton; and, both the higher powers being thus agreed, they applied to Mr. Robert Morrit for the *lettre de cachet* that should consign their offspring to the cloister for his own good.

Within a very short period, therefore, Dr. Hermann was requested to receive a second Freshman in a by-term, and Minim Hall began to assume unwonted proportions as a collegiate institution. There were now no less than five undergraduates within that stately pile, if we include M. de Lernay, who, however, as we have said, occupied a house in the town. Mr. Meyrick brought his son up two or three days before the term began—as soon as his youthful frame, in fact, had recovered itself from the punishment of the stake—and stayed with him for that space at Camford. They dined with the hospitable Principal, and afterwards in Hall with Frederick and the Frenchman, who, like Orpheus, could charm even stocks and stones, and delighted them accordingly.

The old country squire, having thus placed his offspring, as he thought, in polite security, was in a humor to be pleased. He had not himself been a university man, and therefore felt none of those divine regrets that the most prosaic of elderly gentlemen can rarely be free from who brings his son up to the same spot wherein he has passed his own hot youth. Ah, me, what memories throng the paternal breast in such a case, undreamed of by the son! He does not give credit to the "governor," perhaps, for entertaining sentimental emotions at all; but, at all events, it is quite impossible that the lad should appreciate them. He cannot imagine, as he perambulates the town with his father—the one in his bran-new academicals, the other in an old gown hired from the tailor's shop—why the old gentleman should pause at this or that (to him) uninteresting spot, and be silent, and not hear the words he speaks to him.

He conceives with dutiful sorrow that the governor is growing deaf, which he has suspected to be the case for some time. "Not deaf, my boy," the father might reply (only that he is a great deal too sensible to do so), "not deaf; but listening to the voices of the dead, and to the echoes of the music of my youth; for I, too, have been young, although you cannot picture it, and have had young men for my friends in this same dear old place (as I trust you may have); and some are in Heaven, and some are still upon earth; but we shall never be friends together again as we were *here*." Grace, beauty, youth, and a fashionable apparel are not absolutely essential to the possession of feelings such as these. There is often a great deal more pathos in an old fogy of even sixteen stone than his nearest relatives have any idea of. He may return to his muttons and his beeves, to his freehold and his copyhold, his pasture and his arable, upon the very next day, having seen his boy bestowed, perhaps, in the same rooms, wherein he himself had passed the three happiest years of his own existence long, long ago; but that visit to Camford, while it lasted, jerked his tough old heart-strings cruelly. Mr. Meyrick, senior, however, as we know, had long ago reached sixteen stone, and his shadow had by no means diminished since; while, had it been otherwise, there were no memories to jerk his heart-strings in the contemplation of Camford.

"You are two lucky young fellows, and have fallen on your feet with a vengeance here," said the stout squire, as he sipped his port before the fire, in the pleasant dining-chamber of Minim Hall. "With this good gentleman from France as a companion, and no women to make mischief among ye—eh, Master Frederick, eh!—you ought to be as happy as skylarks; although, indeed, as respects the ladies, when I have had my wine, and feel inclined for a snooze, I like to have a tune or two upon the piano as well as most things."

"If you, my dear sir, and your son, will honor my humble residence with your company this evening," observed M. de Lernay, warmly, "it will, I am sure, give my daughter the greatest pleasure to play for you such simple airs as she is mistress of. I do not ask *you*, Mr. Galton, because we are old friends already, and I hope you need no such invitation."

Frederick blushed to the roots of his hair as he replied that he felt this to be the case; and, turning to his two friends, explained to them how, coming up as a total stranger to that almost deserted town, he had already received from M. de Lernay and his daughter the most kind and genial hospitalities. He expressed his gratitude with characteristic enthusiasm, but really without at all overstating the case. Not a day had passed since he had met the De Lernays at the Principal's without their taking compassion on his lonely condition, and entertaining him at their own house. He had very willingly taken advantage of this kindness. The company of his own thoughts was insupportable; not only had he no one in whom to confide his sorrows, but he was pledged to abstain from putting them on paper, or rather, he might write them—as, indeed, he did, in every variety of metre—but only for his own eyes.

Moved by the excessive grief of his father at parting, he had made a voluntary promise that he would not write to Mary Perling for the space of half a year; and he had communicated this resolve to her in a letter, approved of by the doctor himself, but the contents of which had been carefully concealed from the Rev. Robert Morrit.

Mr. Galton, senior, stood in terror of the anathemas which that uncompromising divine would have certainly hurled against him, had he known that even belligerent rights had been ceded to the young woman at Oldborough. He would have ignored her very existence. To such an individual, he would have held that Mr. Frederick Galton could not have written a letter upon equal terms, either six months hence, or after cycles of ages.

"MY DEAR MARY,—An event that we feared has come to pass. My good father says that I shall forget you in six months' time. Do you think that possible? No, indeed. Let us see, however. In the meantime, I have promised not to write to you. Ah me, what years of sorrow I have already seemed to endure since last I saw you! Yours ever, "FREDERICK GALTON."

This was the original manuscript; but the doctor had obtained the erasure of the sentence beginning "Ah me," etc., as hyperbolical, and likely to produce unnecessary anxiety, the period of absence, calculated by the ordinary measures of time, being exactly four-and-thirty hours.

Under these unhappy circumstances, it may be well imagined how grateful to Frederick Galton was such society as that of M. de Lernay and his charming daughter. If he had not been rendered happy under their roof, they had not, at least, permitted him to be miserable. The companionship of a beautiful girl, accomplished in all the arts that adorn existence, cannot be otherwise than attractive to any youth, no matter how solemnly he may be engaged to another young female at a distance. Her conversation was only less agreeable than that of her father, while it abounded with evidences of unartificial and honest feeling, which M. de Lernay lacked. In his presence, and, indeed, in society generally, she spoke little; but at home, and upon subjects of which she was mistress, she talked readily and well. Gleams of satirical wit, reminding her hearers of her parentage as forcibly as any likeness of feature could have done, flashed forth occasionally from her lips; but her ordinary mood was serious, and if left to herself, and, as she thought, unnoticed, a keen observer might perceive her mind was dwelling on some sorrow. Frederick Galton was not so preoccupied with his own woes but that his quick eye soon discovered this, and the knowledge of it attracted him to her all the more. She would be better able, having some sorrow of her own, to sympathize with an unhappy wretch such as himself; and she had sympathized with him, and the wretch had accordingly become decidedly less unhappy. He had sat beside her harp, and, like another David, she had for a time enticed the spirit of melancholy to leave him. She had told him fascinating stories of foreign life out of her own experience (and in this gift of narration she was more like her father than in anything), and he had listened as a boy who sits at the feet of a beloved elder sister, entranced alike by the tale and the teller. They differed, too, sufficiently to produce those arguments, which are always satisfactory when taking place between the sexes, unless the parties happen to be husband and wife. He would put to her supposititious circumstances somewhat parallel to his own, and demand her opinion upon them; and she—sweet casuist—would meet his expectations with a defeat so winning that it was almost a victory for himself. She had no great respect for King Cophetua in his relation to the beggar maid, nor for the Lord of Burleigh with regard to the village lass. Both monarch and nobleman were in her eyes but self-willed, impulsive persons, who had married in a hurry. Without some evidence as to how the king and queen got on afterwards in domestic life, she refused to concede that he had done right in thus allying himself; in the Burleigh case the event had shown that the lady was not strong enough for the place.

As for any greatness of soul in either gentleman, she could see nothing of that. They had, each of them, money and rank enough for two, and had nobody but their own inclinations to consult in the matter; there were no interests but their own at stake. (Frederick

Galton gave a little shudder at this.) No; if Mr. Galton wanted an example of nobility of purpose, and true contempt of conventionality, she would be happy, out of her own personal knowledge, to offer him one that no poets had yet rendered unreal. (And here she smiled, archly enough, for she loved the poets as well as did Mr. Frederick Galton himself.) "A young English officer of the cavalry, greatly attached to his profession and a favorite with all his regiment, suddenly sold out, and left it, no one knowing for what reason. The mess missed him, and regretted him, but after a little, utterly forgot him, as men do forget all things in time. Years afterwards, a captain, upon going his rounds, perceived a new recruit in his troop, with whose face he was not altogether unfamiliar: he did not recognize it, but only concluded that he must have somewhere seen a picture that was like it. Long afterwards, when the recruit had won for himself a commission, and the captain was colonel, the newly-made cornet reminded the latter how very nearly he had been discovered by him, when he had first re-entered his dear old regiment as a private.

"'What! are you So-and-so?' cried the colonel. 'Why, what on earth induced you to go masquerading in this fashion?'

"'Family circumstances,' returned the other quietly. 'I tried other things, but my heart always yearned to the scarlet, and especially to my dear old regiment; so, since I could no longer command in it, I came back to serve.'

"The real fact was, that his mother had suddenly fallen into poor circumstances; he had disposed of his commission, and applied the proceeds to her necessities, and began life over again on his own account, and with scarce a shilling in addition to that which the king gave him when he enlisted. The Lord of Burleigh would scarcely have done *that*, I fancy, Mr. Galton."

This is but an example of the sort of talk which Eugenie would hold with the young Freshman, when they were not arguing (but not as lawyers do), or he was not listening to her harp, or she to his poems, for Frederick was dreadfully ready with his verses, and would recite them on the slightest provocation. So young, so fair, so good, so altogether charming did she appear to him, that he had more than once made up his mind to cast himself at her feet, and confide to her his passionate love—for Mary Perling. For some reason or other, not distinctly known to himself, he postponed this declaration. Perhaps she might think so great a confidence, upon so slight an acquaintance, an impertinence; perhaps she would even decide against him, and take the same unsatisfactory view of the matter as did his father and uncle. At all events, the avowal might disturb the pleasant relations which the young lady and himself had established with one another, and it was most desirable that these should continue. Her society, he had persuaded himself, had become necessary to him, as is a tonic to one physically depressed, and it was welcome even when others shared it.

He was glad, therefore, when M. de Lernay invited Mr. Meyrick and his son to his house that evening, since, jarring as the presence of such people might be there, it was better than their absence, which must needs include his own. If he could but have looked into the future, however, even a little way—alas, alas!

If there had been but a Cassandra in the proctorless streets that night, to whisper "Murder! murder!" in his ear, and hold a bloody dagger by the blade, its handle towards his hand—

"I tell you what it is," observed Mr. Jack Meyrick to his quondam friend as they walked home to Minim Hall that night, after leaving the old gentleman at his inn, "that Eujenny's a ripper, and just the sort of girl for my money."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SUPPER-PARTY.

THE Lent Term was over, and the Easter Term, which is separated from it by an interval of some few days only, was drawing to a close. It was May, the carnival month of Camford, the blithest, brightest epoch in the undergraduate year. That poet must have surely passed his university-days there who first named it "Month of Flowers," and "the laughing May." The flowers may be in the windows only, which, indeed, are full of them, purveyed by nurserymen in market carts with delicate white awnings, and forced in green-houses; but the laughter is native to the place. The May Term is a smile of six weeks long, a ravishing symphony that concludes the harmonious reading year, and ushers in the long vacation. I hear its magic music as I write, made up of all the sounds that most delight the young, from the yearning of the organ thunder to the rustle of silk gowns—not Masters of Arts' gowns (though they have music for some ears), but those of lady-visitors, the angels who condescend to visit there the sons of men.

From the long lines of limes, the murmur of the innumerable bees comes dream-inspiring; from the winding river and echoing bridge, the silver splash of oars; from open windows, through the hyacinth and the rose, breaks laughter fitfully—the music of young hearts aglow with joy—and over all, the chimes, great Handel's chimes, clash night and day.

The very religion of the place is a poem, and removed from that of ordinary life. How different were the "high-built college fanes" in which Frederick Galton now worshipped (for the rules of Minim Hall were lax, and its own little pocket chapel was not well attended,) to the white-washed barn-like edifice at Casterton! How different the diamond-leaded panes of its village-church from those which "blushed with saints and pious kings!" How different its too enunciating parish clerk, who called the whale "the great lieutenant of the waters," to that responsive band of white-robed cherubim, who might have called it anything, in their mystic chant, without the slightest danger of detection. Again, as one who, used to bathe in some sequestered river pool, without one wave save that which is caused by his own immersion, comes to the brink of ocean, and plunges in amid the countless billows, and finds them strangely buoyant, so that he scarce can sink, but is upborne by the warm Thetis bosom, so from his village life and uncompanioned ways, the young man passed into the full flood of undergraduate life, and could not choose but spring to its surface. His wit, his kindliness, and his good looks were so many corks which would not have permitted a much more determined social suicide than he to drown. Reputations are very quickly made at a university, and Frederick Galton was carried triumphantly on the top crest of the Freshman wave along with the best of its foam and sparkle.

The Rev. Robert Morrit was right in selecting Camford as one of the most likely places in the world to efface the remembrance of Casterton and its affairs; if the colors of university life are so fresh and bright, and abiding on the canvas of the mind, as not to be obliterated by years of soberest manhood, how can the early tints which they overlay have force to struggle through them? The memories of childhood, of boyhood, of calf love—how can these survive the brilliant records of that epoch, when youth and friendship, and health and wealth, and poetry and good cheer, all combine together to make us demigods?

And yet Frederick Galton had not forgotten his quiet home, nor the old man, left very solitary there for lack of him, nor his uncle and friend in one; nor the ancient Round, which he had sung so often, and peopled with its former garrisons; nor Eden, and that simple girl in whose smile he had basked so lately, and to part with whom had seemed only a little less than death. He remembered Mary Perling, and his heart, whenever he did so, beat more quickly with that recollection still; but he did not remember her always. His intentions with regard to her were unaltered, but he could scarcely have advocated them with the passionate eloquence of a few months ago.

Time, the healer, was doing his work with him, whether for good or evil, as it must do for us all. We may shriek and tear our hair, and, casting ourselves down upon the grave-top, protest that underneath it lies our heart along with the beloved dead; but nevertheless it is not so. We do not easily forget, indeed, the lost one who is all in all to us, but in time we need to be reminded.

The pleasures and cares of this life choke the seed of regret, which, unlike the grain of mustard-seed, is the greatest of all grains at the first, but dwindles day by day, until its place, the very heart in which it was sown, knows it no more.

In the mornings of those rare days when he was not invited to some breakfast party, Frederick Galton gave himself up to composition with greater or less success, for the benefit of the *Paternoster Porcupine*. The studies of Camford had little charms for him, and as he was sufficiently master of them to ensure his passing the "Little Go," he did not much concern himself with them. One hour's attendance at the lecture delivered by the Vice-principal, Dean, Tutor and Bursar (in one), satisfied the demands of his college, and afterwards he was his own master for the day.

He wrote then until luncheon-time, after which he was certain to be called for by some pleasure-seeker to ride, to drive, to boat, or, if it was wet, to play at billiards. After Hall, he was always engaged to "wine," which generally turned out to be for the whole evening, so that there was really no time left wherein the young gentleman could *think* at all. Reading-men have their work to do at college; fast-men have their vices to employ them; Admirable Crichtons and popular favorites have, least of all, any time to bewail the tender misfortunes of their youth. To men of all kinds, therefore, Camford is the very grave of melancholy. Moreover, in Frederick's case, there was added to the various other causes of distraction, one very uncommon to the place—namely, a young woman. Scarcely a single fine afternoon went by without some expedition being planned by land or water, whereof Eugenie de Lernay and her father formed a part, and out of which Mr. Meyrick, junior, could not be kept. M. de Lernay professed to be interested in this young gentleman, who did not much contribute to the agreeableness of the company. He had, however, powerful sinews, and was "a good oar." They made him "bow" upon all water parties; a position which kept him as far removed as possible from the principal personages, but at the same time permitted him to gaze upon the lovely Eugenie, which was all he asked. When not employed in this harmless occupation, he was continuously engaged in coloring pipes. Now, it is one of the peculiarities of tobacco that, whereas intelligent persons become more thoughtful under its influence, the dull dogs become stupefied. It seems to intensify what is in each the characteristic. And in this respect, Camford life has often an exactly similar effect with tobacco. The youthful mathematician becomes there doubly enamored of his favorite science, the oarsman of boating, the cricketer of cricket, and the man with "a voice" (to his certain destruction, as far as university distinctions are concerned) of singing. Similarly, a vulgar-minded young fellow, if he happen to miss his opportunity of forming a good connection at first, may get into a set at Camford which will encourage his very lowest propensities.

This was unhappily the case with Mr. John Meyrick. He was too proud and too obstinate to be the satellite of any individual, however notorious; but he had plenty of money and could thereby attract a certain worthless circle around him as a centre. His "rooms" (for they are always in the plural, although it is unusual for an undergraduate to possess more than one sitting apartment) were not less frequented, although by a different class, than those of his contemporary, Galton. These two could no longer be termed friends; their pursuits were too dissimilar, and, it may be, their opinions upon the merits of Miss Eugenie de Lernay too much alike, to admit of this. Frederick was indignant that a man who lived so coarsely and viciously, as Meyrick made no secret of doing, should attach himself to so superior a being, and venture to speak of her with familiarity, particularly among his low associates. Meyrick, on the other hand, saw no disparity in the affair at all; for what she did not possess in any profusion—money—he did; and, moreover, he had a hazy notion that he was, genealogically speaking, a person of vast importance, which a Frenchman could scarcely be. He resented, of course, with much indignation, Galton's remonstrances upon this subject, and smarted, as he had never done before he knew this young lady, under the sense of his own inferiority to him. Eugenie was kind and pleasant to Mr. John Meyrick, as she was to everybody. But his share of her attentions was necessarily small in comparison with that of the young poet. Frederick and he had not had any decided quarrel as yet, but they were both very ripe for quarrelling.

On a certain evening, during the boat-races, which at Camford take place in May, Meyrick had a large supper-party in his rooms, at which Galton was present. He had made a point of being so because he had avoided him so much of late, and he knew that his father and uncle would both be displeased in case the squire's son and he should return to Casterton enemies. He arrived, however, rather late, after the men had sat down to table, and perceived, by the sudden silence at his entrance, and a "hush! hush!" which ran through the company, that they had been talking about himself. He was annoyed that any affairs of his should have been made the topic of conversation among the class of persons there assembled; but he seated himself next a boating-man with whom he had a slight acquaintance, and began to speak of the results of that day's racing. He was, however, by no means so occupied with the subject, or entranced with his neighbor's eloquence, but that he could catch some words of a conversation which was being carried on at the other end of the table, where sat the host; peals of laughter now and then interrupted it, and glances of scornful mirth were surreptitiously thrown in Frederick's direction, which called the blood up to his cheek, though he refrained for some time from noticing them.

"A servant-maid—a slavey!" cried one, "and wanted to marry her! Well, that is a good one!"

"Can't conceive any gentleman doing such a thing," observed another, with that thickness of utterance which so materially detracts from the value of an opinion.

"A likely story," observed a third, in reply to some remark which did not reach Frederick's ears; and then there was a roar of laughter.

The youthful mariner was excessively annoyed by these repeated interruptions of his tale, and asked his companion what those confounded fellows up there were sniggering about.

"What is the joke there, gentlemen?" inquired Frederick, with a distinctness which does not always accompany loudness of speech at supper parties. "It is bad manners to have secret jokes in company."

"It would be a deuced deal worse to tell it!" shouted out a nautical person, whereupon there was a second tumult of laughter.

"They're talking about you," observed Frederick's neighbor—"that is the simple fact."

"Mr. Meyrick," said Galton, rising, "permit me to observe—"

"Hear, hear!" broke forth a chorus of drunken voices —"hear the orator."

"Cuss me, if he ain't going to propose his own health!" observed the Hon. Guy Drawlington, yawning.

"Easy, all!" remonstrated Mr. Stretcher Rullock—"let him pull it out!"

"I was about to remark, Mr. Meyrick, that it was scarcely becoming in a friend—"

"Oh, bother your friendship!" replied Meyrick, huskily, and with an evil look in his eyes. "Who cares?"

"Everybody who is a gentleman cares, sir!" retorted Galton, angrily, "even though he may be a habitual drunkard."

Now, an excessive fondness for strong drinks was one of the weaknesses of Mr. John Meyrick's moral character that he was rather ashamed of, and did not make the subject of boast.

"You sentimental humbug!" cried he, passionately, "don't try your hypocritical tricks on *us*, I beg. We know all about you here, *we* do—all about you and your dairy-maid. I should be ashamed to kiss and tell."

Frederick's fingers clutched at a claret jug, and would have certainly launched it at the speaker, but for the interposition of Mr. Rullock's powerful hand.

"The man's drunk," whispered he to Frederick—"the whole crew are drunk except one or two. Ship your oars, my good fellow—ship your oars!"

Some other men had risen around him, and about the host there was a standing army of excited young fellows suggesting various lines of conduct for his consideration. "Apologize!"—"Kick him!"—"Challenge him to fight with champagne corks!"—"Sit down and hold your tongue!'—"Send for the *purleece*, and a stretcher!"

In the midst of this scene of disorder, after much unanswered knocking at the door, entered the porter of the college, and whispered something in Frederick's ear.

"I don't hear you!" exclaimed the young man, sharply, "these blackguards make such a noise. Speak out, man!"

"A lady from Oldborough wishes to see you immediately upon important business. She is waiting at the lodge-gate, sir, now."

"It's Mary Perling!" shrieked Meyrick, derisively; "it's his precious dairy-maid come after him, you may take your oath of it."

A roar of inextinguishable laughter burst from friends and foes at this sally. Frederick Galton cast such a look about him as some maddened bull who looks from matador to matador in indecisive fury; then rising abruptly from the table, he left the room, slamming its double-doors behind him, and followed the porter, who was already half-way down the stairs.

"Tell the lady I will be with her directly!" cried Galton, leaning over the banisters. "I am sorry I was rude to you, James."

"Oh, never mind *that*, sir," returned the porter, grinning. "When the wine is in—why, then, gentlefolks will be gentlefolks, we *knows*."

It was not wine, however, which was making the young man's brain reel, and changing his blood to flame; it was not wine which made his heart throb, so that he had need to press his hand upon it, like one in pain. Yet he went to his chamber, and bathed his burning head in water, and bared it to the cold night air, as he walked across the grass plot to the porter's lodge. There were passions at work within him, more intoxicating, more bewildering than was ever juice of grape. Fury, such as only a nature like his own was capable of entertaining, against John Meyrick and his ribald friends; and reawakened love, the stronger fôr its long sleep of late, and quickened into passionate life by the near presence of the beloved object. Something within him, too, was bidding him take thought while yet there should be time; while he yet stood *alone* under the blue vault of heaven and the quiet stars. His father, uncle, Eugenie, with her reproachful eyes—the images of all these crossed his brain, and each with a look of warning, ere he lifted the latch of the lodge-door.

"She is in here, sir," said the porter, as he ushered him into the little parlor. "This is Mr. Frederick Galton, the young gentleman as you was inquiring for, ma'am."

A little old woman, attired in deep mourning, with a white, worn face, set round with a close-fitting widow's cap, rose up as he entered, and said, very gravely: "I am widow Perling, sir, Mary Perling's mother."

CHAPTER XV.

A TRIP TO OLDBOROUGH.

IT must be a chilling circumstance to any young gentleman, whose arms are extended lovingly to receive his bride, to find within them the unresponsive form of his mother-in-law; but something much worse than disappointment awaited Mr. Frederick Galton. He had closed the door with eager haste, and advanced with outstretched hands quite close to her he would have welcomed ere he discovered his mistake, and now he stood like one turned into stone, looking not upon his love, but upon some messenger of evil tidings. Even in that ill-lighted, dusky parlor, it was easy enough to read the lines of recent sorrow in the countenance of his visitor, and the expectation of some worse woe to come. Her whole presence was instinct with it. No man who beheld her could have said, This is a lady, or not a lady; but must needs have thought of his own mother, and felt a touch of pity. She uttered the few words with which the last chapter concluded, and taking up the one candlestick that stood on the table, held it close to Frederick's face, as though it had been a printed page.

"You have a handsome countenance, young gentleman," said she, "and honest eyes; I wonder whether you have a heart."

"Are you come to break it, then?" groaned Frederick, piteously. "Speak, speak in mercy, woman." He was on his knees looking up into her calm, despairing face, and plucking at her coarse crape sleeve. "Oh, tell me, tell me that your daughter is not dead!"

"I have brought you back your verses," said the widow in a low calm voice, but mechanically like one who is repeating a lesson, "and the note that you wrote to her when you were parted; you may make use of them, perhaps, with somebody else." She spoke with exceeding bitterness, dropping each word into his ear like molten metal. "Please to give me back her foolish ill-spelt letter (if you have it still) and her lock of hair." But when he covered his face, and fell down before her, sobbing, she added: "Then you did love her, did you, Mr. Galton, after all?"

"*Did*, woman! I love her now! Dead or alive she is mine! Take me to where she is! You could not—no, you dare not have buried her without my being sent for. What is this? You are lying! She is not dead! You could not smile like that, if she were dead, being your own daughter."

"No, sir, she is not dead," returned the old lady in a voice now trembling for the first time; "but she is very ill; dying, I fear, for love of you. I would not have come here, like a beggar, to ask for more than gold, but that, as you say, she is my own daughter, and, ah sir, my pride, my all! I am no schemer, sir, God knows. I would to Heaven your eyes had never lit upon my Mary, nor hers on you! I want no young gentleman for my son-in-law. But when your uncle, Mr. Morrit, came over to us, and offered money—"

"Money!" exclaimed Frederick, passionately. "What! he tempted Mary with a bribe to play me false? Damned juggling priest!"

"Hush, hush, sir! Pray be calm! I see now that you had nothing to do with it. That was what Mary always said. But when he told her that you and she could never be married, and that you knew that as well as he, and that you had already found another young woman—I am only repeating what your uncle told us, you know, sir, and being a clergyman, why, of course, I believed him—much more suitable as to circumstances, in case a boy of your age was to think of such matters at all; then Mary—poor thing!—she seemed to fade away just like any rose in one's parlor window; nay, after a week or two she became almost a shadow, and the doctor says it is consumption, if there is nothing which is afflicting her mind, which, however, is unhappily the case. And so I came here, unknown to my poor darling, on the slight chance that things might not be exactly as they were represented. It was very wrong of me, I fear, and self-humiliating, but it is *I*, remember, who have come to seek you and not Mary. She would not have come—not she—to save her own life; and if I had found you the heartless lad whom I expected to find, I should have taken back with me all the tokens she had given you of her misplaced love, and returned them to her, so that she should no longer be flattered by false hopes. For she does hope still, I know, Mr. Galton, for all that I can say to convince her. It seemed to me that it would almost be better for her to die than to live on trusting to—. Oh, young gentleman, God forgive me for thinking the things that I have thought of you these many days!" And the dear old lady's chin began to move up and down in a manner which, to the attentive observer, as Admiral Fitzroy would say, portends much rain.

"You are going back to Oldborough at once, I suppose," cried Frederick; "by to-morrow's coach."

"By to-night's mail, Mr. Galton," replied the old lady, wiping her eyes with vigor. "It starts at half-past eleven, and arrives at Wentworth Junction in time for the first morning train. My dear Mary thinks I am gone to London to decline her situation with Lady Ackers, which she is much too ill to accept, and she will expect me home to breakfast. What blessed comfort I shall have to bring her—I who have striven so hard to persuade her that you had forgotten her! I shall see her smile once more."

"That is a sight which I would not miss on any account," said Frederick, gravely. "I will go with you to-night to Oldborough, and see her too."

"You *will!*" cried the old lady, starting up like one of half her age, and putting both her hands in his. "Oh, but this is a brave boy!" She scanned him from head to foot with eyes that had no longer suspicion or ill-will in them. "I do not wonder that my Mary loves you. But no, Mr. Galton, this must not be. We must do nothing rashly. You might get into trouble for leaving school—(she looked up at his tasseled cap) that is, I mean college. You are very, very young; that was what Mr. Morrit dwelt upon so. I am wrong, it will be said, to come and tempt you to do what your relations so disapprove—taking advantage, as it were, of your youth and tenderness of heart. And yet, what is all that to me when my daughter is dying?"

"Ay, what indeed?" echoed Frederick. "Now, see, you have come to me on a matter of life and death; you can tell the porter that as you go out, and I will be at the coach-office in half an hour."

With one squeeze of the old lady's hand, as earnest of his faithfulness rather than adieu, the young man hurried away to his rooms, and thrust some necessaries into a carpet-bag. Then he wrote a few hurried lines to the Principal (who, by great good fortune, happened to be out at a dinner-party that evening), preferring that course to asking leave of absence upon such an expedition of any subordinate authority of his college.

The resolution of the gatekeeper, who would have opposed his egress, was overcome by the young man's passionate anxiety and assurance that he had made matters all right with Dr. Hermann; and within an hour of leaving that roaring supper-party, he was sitting behind the night-mail, with Mrs. Perling for his sole companion. The inside places had been taken, but that was of no consequence to the wheelwright's hardy widow; and as for himself, he could scarcely have endured confinement in his excited state of mind.

Expulsion from Minim Hall was the least grave of the possible contingencies which might follow his present course of action. First, of course, in his thoughts, was the joy of meeting with his love after an absence that had almost extended to the six months, which had been agreed upon as the limit of their separation. All conscientious scruples about anticipating the date were swept away from his mind by the news of his uncle's conduct. There had been a tacit understanding, as he conceived, that no influence should be used as respected his attachment to Mary Perling either on one side or the other; if he did not press his suit, neither was his family to interfere in opposition to it, and far less in so discreditable a manner as Mr. Morrit had done. With that gentleman he was furiously indignant, and really not without considerable reason. The curate had not behaved like a gentleman, or, as Frederick would have expressed it, had he been only a little less exasperated, "like himself." Perhaps this gentlemanliness, which includes so many excellent things, is only comparative with the very best of us. No one possesses it in perfection. We may be honorable, and honest, and delicate-minded in a vast number of things, yet mean enough in others. It was very base in the Rev. Robert Morrit to ride over to Oldborough and misrepresent matters in the way which he had done; although from his own stand-point, the affair wore doubtless a very different aspect to that which it presented to Frederick. Here was a lad with a foolish fond father, about to ruin himself socially, at the very commencement of his life, by a low, and, very probably, a vicious marriage. Was it likely, even putting other considerations of immense importance out of the question, that a servant girl who suffered herself to be made love to by her master's son, should make him a virtuous wife? Could she ever seriously have flattered herself that he would have made her his wife at all? Would she not be inclined to make a favorable composition for so ridiculous a claim, and would not slight damages for such a breach of promise suffice, if offered promptly by the defendant's attorney,—that is, by his reverend uncle—in ready money? Would it not be well to put one's check-book in one's pocket, and visit the wheelwright's widow in person, and inquire the lowest figure at which this little matter could be managed? Something like this had probably passed through the mind of the well-meaning Mr. Morrit. But arrived at Oldborough, he had met with unexpected opposition, and found human nature itself quite inconsistent with his previous conceptions.

Clergymen who aspire to be men of the world subject themselves to disappointments of this kind more, perhaps, than any other class of people; and they are also inclined to be obstinate under failure. Upon discovering the phenomenon of a wheelwright's widow in indigent circumstances, not anxious to exchange her daughter's feelings for bank-notes, and the daughter herself really drooping and melancholy, like some low-born maiden in a ballad sick for love of a king's son, the curate lost his temper. He not only dwelt upon the madness and folly of the attachment he had come to dissolve, and pointed out the destruction it must needs entail upon his nephew's prospects, but he took to pious frauds. He represented Frederick himself as being not unwilling that the matter should drop, and, I am afraid, greatly exaggerated certain statements which the Principal of Minim Hall had written concerning the young Freshman and Miss de Lernay. "I think," wrote the doctor in confidence, "that the society of Miss de Lernay is gradually winning our young friend from his melancholy."

"I am advised, Mrs. Perling," misquoted the curate, "that my impressionable nephew has already been smitten with the charms of a young lady at Camford, not unsuitable to be his wife, if he happened to be seven-and-twenty, instead of seventeen; being the boy he is, such a thing is not worth mentioning, and I only speak of it in mercy to your daughter, that she may cease to consider the attentions of such a butterfly lover as anything at all serious."

Well-meaning but wicked words, which bore fruit the very opposite of that which the speaker intended: they sent Mary Perling's pulse down to something not worth mentioning, so that the Oldborough doctor shook his head about her; they drove her mother, as we have seen, off to Minim Hall; and they were now driving her back again, at ten miles an hour, by the side of the very young gentleman whom it had been their sole intention to keep apart from her and hers forever.

Frederick Galton's ire was great, as he thought upon these things; but he well knew that the good doctor had been no party to the curate's design or its execution, and therefore, as respected his father, the young man's conscience smote him sore with respect to the present undertaking. Unpleasant thoughts flitted across him concerning that sorrowful parent toiling on for his sole benefit night and day, over the lonely Downs, and the little return he was himself now making for it all.

Was it not holding cheap that life-long love thus to—

"But then she is ill; she may be even dying," answered the poor lad aloud, as though he would have stifled the still small voice of conscience by articulate speech.

"Oh, let us hope not that," replied Mrs. Perling, simply. "I look to the sight of you quite setting her up again."

Setting her up again! a very common expression surely, and perfectly intelligible; yet somehow it jarred upon the young man's ear. While the good widow had been pleading her daughter's cause with natural eloquence, she had aroused in Frederick a very honest admiration for herself; but now that her cause (as surely it deserved to do!) had triumphed, he began to grow fastidious about his mother-in-law elect. Why needed she have confided to him her opinion that it was a shame that the coach seats were built so high, or at least that there were no footstools provided for persons like herself, with short legs? Also, how could that relative expectant have such an extraordinary relish for sandwiches, which had obviously been carried about with her for a considerable time? She had offered this unpleasant refreshment to him in a newspaper; and though he had not partaken of it, it had destroyed his appetite quite as completely as if he had. Would Mary have eaten them, he wondered? Fancy Eugenie de Lernay eating sandwiches which seemed to have received the impression of the human form! Arrived at the railway station, the widow insisted upon using her third-class return ticket, which, of course, consigned Frederick also to cushionless seats. He was very tired by that time, and would have hailed the conveniences for repose afforded by the class he usually travelled by; and, moreover, he thought the guard addressed him in a tone that he was not accustomed to hear from railway officials. These, indeed, were small inconveniences, not to be considered by a philosopher, but their aggregate effect upon the young gentleman was considerable. He was not so blind a lover, even then, but that the passing thought, "And if I marry this woman's daughter I shall be subject all my life to petty humiliations such as these," overclouded his mind.

Weary as he was by the time they reached their journey's end, the sight of Oldborough church tower, with the reflections which it evoked—"Shall I be married there, I wonder, or at Casterton, and when?"—revived him like a tonic. The little station, with its tiny strip of garden shining in the morning sun, backed by the ancient woods that overhung the sleeping town, and skirted the broad river which ran through it, made up a pleasant picture. Declining to take advantage of the omnibus accommodation, upon the plea that "sixpence saved was sixpence got," Mrs. Perling led the way on foot through quite an avenue of elms to an old stone bridge, with whose little toll-house the town might be said to commence. Nothing was moving at that early hour save the innumerable rooks which clanged and circled in the clear blue air. All nature wore an air of placid beauty. The stream which circled and eddied beneath the archways shot forth beyond them, smooth and swift, dividing silently where it met the osier-beds, and reuniting beyond them only to divide again. Somewhere out of sight, however, the river forked, and the sound of far-off waters tumbling—some distant "lasher"—struck musically upon the ear.

"What a lovely spot!" exclaimed Frederick, leaning for a moment over the balustrades.

"Ay, indeed," rejoined the widow, briskly; "and especially next month, when the regatta is held here, and there are shows upon the island, and fireworks at the weir, and all the street yonder is lined with booths, and you can scarcely hear yourself speak for bands of music."

"And you like that sort of thing, do you?" inquired the fastidious one.

"Why, no; not I," answered the unconscious widow. "My young days are gone by, when I took pleasure in such things; but Mary, she, of course, enjoys herself when she can; or, at least, she used to do so, poor dear! And when the ball was held on the Eyot last year, just before her poor father died—which couldn't be foreseen, alack, alack—there was nobody so sought after, I can tell you, though she was but just sixteen. I should have been quite against her going, but that it was so kind of the regatta committee to send us tickets. Some people thought us quite stuck up for accepting them, but it was not for us to be rude to gentlefolks, and send them back again; and I am sure there was not a girl in the company who looked more the perfect lady than did our

Mary, although I says it as shouldn't say it.—This is the short way, Mr. Galton, over this stile. Lord! how white you do look; well, and I daresay you're tired, not being used to sit up o' nights like me; but you shall have some gin and peppermint directly, which, as my poor husband used to say, is the only thing when you feel a little down-like. That is our cottage yonder, under the limes."

Frederick did indeed feel a little "down-like," but not from that species of depression which could be cured by the recipe in question. He was hurt beyond measure at the notion of his beloved object having been patronised by a regatta committee, and made up his mind that Oldborough church at least, of all churches, should never witness his marriage with Mary Perling. He already beheld a crowd of vulgar spectators, some of whom could doubtless boast of having encircled, in the waltz, her lovely waist with their horrid arms. When Mrs. Perling said "There is the cottage," however, he forgot everything, but that he was looking upon the dwelling of the most beautiful girl in England, and one who loved him so intensely, that she could not live without him: that confession had in effect been almost made to him by her mother, and it was amply corroborated by his own heart. His pulses throbbed with the fulness of the spring at the sight of the low-roofed house now coming into view. It was a very unambitious red-bricked edifice, with a wooden porch to the door, sadly in want of a coat of paint. A little garden, given up mostly to vegetables, rapidly merged into an apple-orchard, not very promising as to fruit; but there was an arbor in the latter, overlooking the weir, which caught Frederick's eye at once, possibly as being a place adapted for love-passages. Mrs. Perling observed his glance in that direction, and explained that the arbor had been her husband's favorite haunt of a summer evening, but that now—none of them having the heart to go near it—it was occupied with apples and onions, and tools; he had likewise, she added, liked to sit with his pipe under "them limes," which, although they overshadowed all the roof, stood at the back of the house in the wheelwright's yard. A pleasant smell of wood-chips here made itself apparent, which told of this latter locality. "Our Mary is sure to be up and waiting for me, for she can't sleep, poor thing; she as was used to be such a lie-a-bed; but the kitchen is at the back, so she won't see us a-coming; neither will Jane, who is getting the breakfast ready; so we shall come upon them quite unawares. Now, do you stay in the passage a minute, while I go in to prepare her—for she is very weak." Thus speaking, Mrs. Perling opened the door, which was unprovided with bell or knocker, and letting the latch down softly behind her, motioned to her companion to remain where he was.

CHAPTER XVI.

MARY PERLING AT HOME.

STANDING in semi-darkness, Frederick Galton saw the widow open a door at the end of the passage, through which streamed a river of light upon the whitewashed walls and sanded floor. He could not see into the room itself, but could hear all that passed in it. Some one seemed to rise with haste, and yet with difficulty, and there was a sound of uneven footsteps hastening to meet her.

"Dearest mother," cried a brisk and cheerful female voice; "how quietly you stole in upon us."

Then there was a hurried embrace, and "how is our dear invalid to-day? How is my beautiful child?"

"I am well enough, mother," rejoined a third person, at whose tones, though low and languid, Frederick's heart leapt within him, and the love-light came into his eyes. "I am not worse than when you left me, and no better. But you, I fear, have fagged yourself sadly about that situation at Lady Acker's. What a trouble I am to everybody about me!"

"No, no, no, my pretty one," replied her mother, tenderly; "you are nothing but a blessing to us all. If we could only see you well again, we should be as happy as the day is long, shouldn't we, Jane?"

"Ay," cried the brisk voice, "that should we; and we *shall* see it, too. Heaven never could have sent our Mary only to pine and fade. The idea of those pretty cheeks getting hollow and sunken! it is not to be entertained for a moment! no, they are dimples, that is all, and the color that is gone for a little, is soon coming back again, isn't it, Bob? *Cherry ripe, cherry ripe.*" And the note of some imprisoned bird began at once to imitate that popular melody.

Then there was a sad silence, broken by little sobs.

"Mary, Mary," cried the brisk voice, earnestly, "O pray, do not give way thus; you'll break mother's heart, who loves you so, and mine, sweet sister. There are brighter days in store."

"Many, many, I hope," added the widow, confidently.

"For you, dear mother, and Jane, I hope there are," replied Mary, feebly; "I am sure you deserve them, which I do not; I have been of no use in this world to anybody. A vain and foolish girl—a wicked girl. You will get on better when I am gone."

Again the hasty and uneven walk; and Frederick knew that loving arms were being thrown around the suffering girl, and lips pressed to hers that might have drawn forth any poison from a wounded heart, save that alone with which love tips his darts.

"Can I not give you any comfort, my own dear sister? Has he taken all power from me, as health and youth from you?" cried a passionate voice.

"Hush, hush," replied the sick girl, earnestly. "You don't know what you say. I had rather die than not have loved him even now. How hard and cruel you look, Jane! I know that you are thinking evil of him. I would rather you thought evil—yes, I would—of *me*. Ah, if you could only see him! You say that I am fair; his face is ten times pleasanter to look upon than mine. He is thoughtful, like yourself, sister, and reads—why, he reads everything, and there is nothing he does not know. Then he is an author, a poet: I could show you—if it were not that he has forbidden me to do so—the most beautiful verses; ah, so sweet, so sweet, and all for me, for me alone!"

The voice that had been somewhat testy and irritable as is but too usual with the best of us, when inadequate comfort—"the vacant chaff well meant for grain"—is offered to our aching hearts, here dissolved in plaintive melody; the speaker's thoughts were once more with her lover and the happy past.

"I have read, dear sister," returned the other, gravely, "that it is easy for those who have the gift of verse to persuade not only others of their sincerity, but even themselves; I do not say they lie—"

"Thank you, sister Jane," interrupted the sick girl, bitterly; "that is very kind, and like your charity. How dare you tell me things like these!—you who know not what it is to be beloved."

"That is true, dear Mary," responded Jane Perling, meekly. "God has seen fit to limit my love to my mother and my sister. Pray, don't be pained, dear; I know you did not mean to twit me with my lameness; and what you say is very true. I do not know what the passion is with which this man has inspired you; and loving you so, and seeing the harm he has done you, perhaps I judge him harshly."

"You do, you do, Jane," cried the young girl, enthusiastically.

"Still, if he has ceased to love you, Mary."

"Who told you that, Jane?" inquired a terrified hollow voice, which Frederick for the moment did not recognize. "If you want me to die at once, repeat such words as those. No; don't kiss me, please, just now; I do not want your kisses. If I was away from home, look you, in service, or somewhere, so that I could not come to you, and they would not let me write, and if a man came hither—a clergyman even—and told you that I neither cared for you nor mother, would you believe him?"

"Indeed, Mary, we never should."

"But if he told you *truth.* If, through absence, or constant persuasion, or some means that you could not even imagine, I had really grown so as to forget you, or at all events, to agree never to see you more, and to endeavor to feel as though I had neither mother nor sister—would you straightway forget *me?* Would your love fade away as quickly as mine? Could you thenceforth live merrily on, with my memory blotted out of your heart also, as though I had never been? Would not the days we have passed together from our youth up, recur to you, even though you strove to forget them; our games in the orchard, our feasts in the summer-house, our trips on the river; the nights and nights we have lain awake with our arms around one another's necks, and you have told me stories of your own weaving?"

"I should remember them all, Mary; I think I should even recollect them better for the cruel separation between us and you."

"Then how much more, Jane," urged the sick girl, solemnly, "should I not believe the wicked falsehoods that are told about—about my *love.* And if I did believe them—which I do not, no, I will not think he has forgotten me, although he is so wise and so much above me every way—do you think that I could forget *him?* Oh, never, never to my dying day! I should love him, almost the better, because he had so cruelly forsaken me."

"Then, if he wrote to say that he remained faithful to you, my dear," quoth Mrs. Perling, as drily as she could, "he would actually lose something of your affection. While if he came in person—"

"Mother," cried the young girl, eagerly, "you have seen him. There is some one in the passage. I hear a step that I should know among a thousand. Fred, Fred, Fred!"

Mary Perling rose from her chair, in which she had been sitting before the fire, propped by pillows, and strove to run to meet him; but if Frederick Galton had not caught her in his ready arms, she must have fallen through sheer weakness. Her looks were sadly altered since he had seen her last at Casterton, and yet she was not less beautiful than before. She had never wanted refinement, but a certain transparent grace pervaded her now, which became her vastly. A stranger would have been moved to tenderness by the contemplation of those plaintive eyes, those cheeks so waxen wan; what wonder, then, that the young poet-lover threw himself upon his knees beside her, regardless of the comfortless stones, and covered her attenuated hand with a hundred kisses.

This really affecting scene took place in a kitchen —a very clean one, it is true, with everything within it brushed and furbished to an extent rarely seen, save in one of Her Majesty's lighthouses—but still a kitchen.

Now that the wheelwright's business had been disposed of, and there were no heavy-footed men to come in and out of the cottage, making a "caddle" everywhere, it was the economical custom of the Perling family to use this apartment as a sitting-room. It looked out upon the yard instead of the garden, indeed, but still it was a cheerful, comfortable room enough, "and one saves the parlor-fire in winter, and the wear and tear of the best carpet," explained the widow in apology; "and you see Mary's chair is quite out of the draught from the scullery-door. And here is another chair for you, Mr.

Galton—just give it a dust with your apron, Jane—and it's well if you haven't worn a hole in the knees of your trousers already."

Jane Perling was lame, and limped very much in her walk, as we have mentioned, and she had not a pretty face; but yet it was a very interesting one. Nineteen men out of twenty would have preferred her sister's features, but if the angels had been asked their opinion, it is probable that they would have reversed the judgment of humanity. There are two sorts of cheerfulness in which the faces of some women are dressed; the one affected, and very unbecoming, which seems to say: "I am trodden upon—I am despised—my feelings are always being injured, yet see how resigned and even cheerful I am;" the other is the natural garb of a chastened spirit. "God has afflicted me," it says, "in His good pleasure, but it is not for me to afflict others with my complainings. I am cut off from many joys, but not from the greatest of all joys—that of striving to make my fellow-creatures happy."

Notwithstanding her infirmity, Jane Perling was an active, brisk little body, doing the work of two ordinary people in admirable fashion, and when all work was done, down to the most humble tasks, she indulged herself with mixing mentally in the very best of company. Regatta committees and the like took no notice of her, but she entertained at home a select circle invited from her own bookshelf.

She stood silent and blushing, reflecting upon what she had said against Mr. Frederick Galton in his hearing, and wishing it unsaid; but when that young gentleman arose and offered his hand with a pleasant smile, she knew at once that she was forgiven.

"She is my only sister, sir, and very dear to me; so pray excuse what you have heard," observed she, simply.

"I don't excuse it, Miss Perling, because I applaud it," returned he, warmly. "I hope to earn goodwill from you as genuine as that distrust I have involuntarily incurred. I would far rather have you for my advocate than my antagonist."

Jane returned the pressure of his fingers, but no reply.

"You will do your best to like me after you have got over your dislike?" added he, reading her silence aright.

"Well, I couldn't stop her, you know," pleaded the widow; "and though it was all my fault, why, it's quite a proverb that listeners never do hear any good of themselves. Now, you and Mary stay here while Jane and I get breakfast ready for you in the parlor. I daresay you have plenty to say to one another."

Nor could St. Chrysostom of the golden mouth, nor the eloquent Demosthenes, nor any other agreeable speaker, sacred or profane, have framed a sentence more grateful to the feelings of those to whom it was addressed, than were those few simple words of widow Perling.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE VOW.

SINCE even the homely wheelwright's widow had the delicacy to leave the two reunited lovers alone together, it would ill become us to invade their privacy. Suffice it to say that all doubts for the future, all fears, all suspicions, including, perhaps, some vague ones of his own fidelity, were swept away from Frederick Galton's mind in that single moment of ecstasy. My advice to parents and guardians who have made up their minds to be cruel to young people who are consumed with affection for one another, is to keep the two igneous bodies at some distance apart. Let them write to each other if they will, defraying their own postage; let them exchange "kisses" in burning wax—dropped outside the envelopes; let them seal with a Cupid, or a true-lover's knot, if they please, but by all means keep them asunder. One touch of a soft palm—and this is supposing less than generally happens at such interviews—will undo the work of a separation extending over many months; before one flash of a pair of loving eyes, a whole host of prudent resolutions will vanish like an army in the clouds at the stroke of sunlight.

"So you never lost your trust in me, Mary, darling!" cried Frederick in a rapture; "you always told them that I should be true and firm."

"I always *told* them so," said Mary, softly, and casting down her lovely eyes, which were dewy; the plentiful moisture encumbered the flower, and weighed down its beautiful head.

"Then you didn't quite believe in me yourself, my own, my—" Here followed a number of pretty terms.

"I scarcely dared to do so, Frederick, dear, you were so far, far higher than I."

"Nay, love, I have not so far to stoop," replied he gayly, and I am afraid he illustrated the remark by bringing his lips down on a level with her own.

"I didn't mean *that*," returned Mary, simply (and we contend that she *was* simple, against all the Materfamiliases in Christendom who may lay forefinger in rest against her), "I meant that you are a gentleman, and we are but poor people, and—and—"

"My dearest girl, I am as poor as Job, and I fear I shall have to exercise no little of his patience. I have nothing of my own until my father dies, which God forbid should happen!" said Frederick, gravely. "You and I, if we marry early, will have to live by the pen."

Mary looked up wondering, as though in some doubt between sheepfolds and the profession of literature.

"I got three pounds sixteen shillings last week for a little contribution to the *Porcupine;* call it four pounds, and there would be two hundred pounds a year at once, if I wrote a paper every week."

The youthful author looked so flushed and confident, that no person with any feeling would have inquired how long he had taken to compose the manuscript in question, or how many had been written in vain, and were manuscripts—unprinted paper—still.

"It is pleasant, Mary, to gain money by one's own exertions even for one's self; and how much more so must it be when we work for those we love."

"That is just what our Jane says when she churns the butter!" exclaimed Mary. "I used to think it very hard work myself, the few times I tried it, but she says that there is music for her ear in every turn of the handle; and as for putting the prints on, it's a treat, for she cries out: 'That's for mother!' when she stamps the butter with the forget-me-not, and 'That's for Mary!' when she uses the rose. We only keep two cows now; but at one time we had quite a dairy, and Jane used to take the butter to market herself, in a big basket with a cloth over it."

"And did *you* ever take butter to market, Mary?"

"Well, once I did," replied Mary, "and only once, for I didn't quite understand what to do about it; and I had a scarlet cloak on, and they called me Little Red Ridinghood."

"I don't wonder!" exclaimed Frederick with admiration; "and I could eat you up, you darling, as the wolf did who pretended to be her grandmother; I could, indeed." Whereupon ensued more raptures.

Then, after a discreet cough in the passage, widow Perling came in to say that breakfast was almost ready, and should she show Mr. Frederick to the room to which his carpet-bag had been already taken. Her poor Charlie's room it was, who had been drowned at sea, years and years ago, she said, or matters would be very different with them now in respect to money. He had been an engineer in all manner of outlandish places, at one time even in Turkey; and was thought so highly of, that he was sent for by a great shipping firm at

St. Petersburgh, and perished on his way thither in a storm. Upon the mantlepiece were some models, neatly executed, of various machines, and one very rude effigy of a fortress, used to hold spills, "the very first model as my poor Charlie ever made."

One of the drawers was full of rusty screws and little bolts of iron, kept as sacred relics; and there was a portrait very ill executed, of this lost genius of the house of Perling, hanging over the fireplace.

"You must sleep here a single night," quoth Mrs. Perling; "you must do that, after being deprived of your rest so long, or otherwise I should have liked you to return to Camford at once.. You have cured our Mary already, that is evident; and I am so fearful that your being here will get you into a scrape with your schoolmaster, or whatever you call him."

"There will be rather a row, I am afraid," observed Frederick, seriously; "but don't you be alarmed, Mrs. Perling. I have done what is right in coming hither, and shall have plenty to say for myself to all inquirers. I should not care much, even though I were expelled from Minim Hall. I could go to London, and earn my own living, if that were all."

"Nay, Mr. Galton, but I trust you will not be thinking of that. It is far easier to talk of such a thing than to do it; and people who have been brought up comfortable, with everything provided for them, have no idea how difficult are bread, and meat, and clothes to come by, which have seemed such a matter of course. Why, my poor Charlie there, he was in town a month supporting himself upon his own resources—for a certain reason. My poor husband and he had quarrelled about his refusing to be a wheelwright, and stay at Oldborough; and he had a very high spirit, and left his home, just as you might do, and about your own age; and he was a clever young fellow, too, if ever there was one. You may smile, sir, but if you had known him, you would have said so—so modest, and yet so wise and sure as he was.

Ah me! ah me! And being brought up simply—although he was never stinted, thank God, in anything—he was better fitted to cope with hard fare and privations than such as you. But he couldn't keep himself in London with all his wits, and he wrote me a letter under the rose—I have it now—to beg me to make up matters with his father; and so I did, the good man being ready enough, and sick for his boy by that time. And so the dear fellow came back, and got his way, and was apprenticed to the engineering trade, and sent hither and thither on shipboard till—till—till he was drowned, poor lad! It is not well, Master Frederick, I fear it is not well, to go against the wishes of one's friends." And the good widow, unnerved by the reminiscences she had herself evoked, and by the foreboding which she had suggested with respect to Frederick Galton and her daughter, could not help letting fall a tear or two.

"Your son's case and mine are very different," said Frederick, a little stiffly. "Would you have me sacrifice Mary as well as myself to a conventional prejudice? We are both young—well, very young, if you please—and therefore have all the more time to look before us. We plighted troth to one another last winter, and have renewed it, if it wanted renewal, this morning. Winters and summers may come and go first, but your daughter shall be my wife. Be sure of that. If I play her false, may God—"

"Mr. Galton," cried the widow, interrupting him, gravely, "do not invoke the curse of Heaven upon you lightly. I have done what I hope is for the best in bringing you here, but I am not sure—I honestly tell you that I am not quite sure that I have done right. I have a mother's love for a daughter threatened with death to plead in my behalf; but you, generous boy, have only the rash, headstrong love of a youth for a maiden. You would never wrong her—the God of the fatherless forbid!—but you may, it is possible, I say, that you *may* be induced to desert her. It does not seem possible now, because you have just seen her, and are about to see her again; but once more separated from her, and worked upon by those who have every right to speak—your uncle, for instance—"

"A liar!" exclaimed Frederick, passionately.

"Then your own father—the very mention of his name, see, moves you—has *he* no right to say '*No?*' there being so many, many reasons why he should do so. Therefore, be not rash with thy tongue, and let not thine heart be hasty to call God to witness, since he is in Heaven, and thou upon earth."

The widow spoke very gravely, but without a touch of sanctimoniousness; it was easy to see she was uttering the dictates of her heart.

"I would that my father could hear you speak," replied Frederick, earnestly, "for he loves good people."

Mrs. Perling shook her head.

"I am far from good, Mr. Frederick; and if it were otherwise, that would make little matter. Gentlefolks like to marry their sons into good families; but that is another sort of goodness altogether. I can only do what I can. From henceforth, our Mary, since she is going to be yours, shall not disgrace you by doing any handiwork such as girls in her station would have to do, although, indeed, the dear child has ever been as a flower of the field. I shall send her to Lady Ackers's very shortly—for a change of scene is necessary for her—as was intended; but not as any sort of servant. The housekeeper, Mrs. Mettal, is an old friend of mine, and has her ladyship's license to act entirely as she pleases with Mary. For the rest," sighed the widow, "we must leave things to take their course, hoping all will turn out well, and with God's blessing; but—"

"But, but," exclaimed Frederick, impatiently; "why, my good lady, you are all buts. But what?"

"But the breakfast is waiting, and I am hindering you," replied Mrs. Perling, with forced gayety. "I only spoke to you just those few words, and I wish they had been fewer, since they have put you out, because my heart was very full; but it shall not happen again, Mr. Frederick, during your stay. We are very homely folks, but I hope we may make you comfortable, and that you will enjoy yourself."

And Mr. Frederick Galton did enjoy himself very completely. He remained but a day and a night at the cottage, so that much that might otherwise have struck him as coarse and vulgar, only appeared to him novel; it was less like four-and-twenty hours of actual life, than acting a charade; and, moreover, the principal character of the piece was independent of all accessories, and while she was on the stage, its furnishings were of little moment.

Frederick's presence seemed to have worked a charm upon the invalid beauty, and although she had not previously left her chair by the fire for days, she accompanied him for hours out of doors, not walking, indeed, but sauntering after lovers' fashion. He plucked her a posy in the little garden, and then they strayed through the apple-orchard, down to that inevitable summer-house by the river-side. The waters leaped and roared over the weir close by, and it was the last place one would think adapted for conversation, besides being slightly damp; yet they remained there with great content, whispering fondly of the future. It was early June with them, as with the gleaming woods.

They even visited the cow-house, where they found Miss Jane Perling sitting upon a three-legged stool, and employed in an earlier stage of the butter-process than that of churning. "The girl is busy," explained she, "helping mother in the kitchen, and I thought I might make myself useful in this way. Colly knows me, and would not kick upon any account." Whereupon the gentle creature turned its tender eyes upon its mistress, yearningly, and made as though it would caress her with its large rough tongue.

"Even the dumb animals love Jane," said Mary, as she and Frederick sauntered forth beneath the limes; "nor is there a workman yonder who, after his day's labor, would not walk ten miles to please her. I wish I was as good as Jane."

"You are good enough for me, at all events, Mary mine," replied Frederick, laughing; "why, you are all excellent people. Your sister is perfect, doubtless; but for my part, I prefer a being just a little short of an angel."

"Nay, don't—don't laugh at Jane, Fred. She will learn to love you in time almost as dearly as I do. Even now she says she does not wonder that you have stolen my whole heart."

"She said that, did she?" cried Frederick, greatly pleased. "Then I will try to steal some of hers too."

So, before he left the cottage the next morning on his return to Camford, he took the lame girl's hand within his own, they being for a moment left together, and "Please unlearn," said he, "some harsh things you have taught yourself respecting me, and tell me what I can do to win your regard."

"My regard is nothing worth, Mr. Galton," returned she, with energy; "but if you would have Heaven bless you, do, sir, treat our poor Mary well. You love her now, and ah, how she loves *you!* But after a little, perhaps—"

"My word is solemnly pledged to marry your sister," said Frederick a little stiffly, "and even if my heart were not in accord with it, I should keep my word."

"Yes, you will marry her doubtless; that must be, I see," responded Jane. "But after marriage, bear with her, sir; do not be bitter against her for this and for that." She clasped her fingers tightly together in her passionate prayer. "Remember that you wooed her first; that your very presence was a wooing to such as she. Her humble birth, her homely bringing-up, you will never visit them on her as though they were crimes—oh no, oh no. We will not trouble you—neither my mother nor I—we will not, indeed; it would be unsuitable, I know; we must keep apart from her henceforth. Only, if she is ill, sir, you will let us both come and kiss the cheek that it is yours to caress, but ours to weep over also, in sickness and in sorrow, and which we should love just as well as though disease should mar it, or the damps of death were gathering there. God keeps the few he makes like her in His own charge: beware how you harm her; His vengeance will be swift and terrible. But you will not incur it—no, no. Oh, Mr. Galton, promise me that you will treat our Mary well!"

She poured out her appeal with such impetuous rapidity, that he to whom she made it could not have interrupted her, even if he had disregarded her uplifted finger, entreating to be heard; and just as she had finished, Mary herself entered the room, so that reply was rendered impossible. Then adieux had to be made of a private character; and the widow herself accompanied him on the road to the station, and only left him at the door of the ticket-office. But when Frederick was ensconced in his carriage, the sole first-class passenger from Oldborough, and the bell for starting was ringing, there mixed with the sound a hasty and uneven tread upon the wooden platform, and Jane Perling hurried to the windows.

"You did not promise," she whispered hoarsely, and out of breath—"you forgot to give me your sacred promise to treat our Mary well."

"I will do so upon my sacred word of honor, Jane."

"Here is a book; it is all I have to give; but I should like you to accept it, sir. It is the Testament."

"I understand you, Jane," said he. So he took the book, and kissed it, and swore upon it, so help him God, to love and cherish Mary his future wife to his life's end.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PRINCIPAL IN HIS STUDY.

FOR an undergraduate son of Alma Mater to absent himself for two nights and two days without her leave, is a very serious offence; nor is it to be by any means mitigated by the statement that the offender has only gone a-courting. The passion of love is strictly forbidden by university statute; the only legitimate channel for its expression being the construction of Greek sapphics, an outlet only available to classical men. Every tutor is vowed to celibacy; every dean is a priest of Vesta, and if he ever ventures to marry, is immediately buried alive—in some country living. The heads of colleges, it is true, are Benedicts; but they rarely wed until they have reached their grand climacteric, and are only permitted to do so as a caution. It was supposed by the royal and benevolent founders that such persons would be the very last to sympathize with youthful slaves of the softer passion, and that they would chastise them severely from the genuine conviction that such chastisement would be for their own good.

Mr. Frederick Galton did not expect much sympathy from the venerable chief of Minim Hall, with the feelings that had prompted his unlicensed expedition, and when the porter told him upon his arrival in college that his presence was required at the Lodge without delay, he knew that the interview would be the reverse of agreeable.

"I hope you will come well out of it, sir," said the official, touching his cap; "but the Principal is exceedingly put out. He sent a special messenger to your people yesterday, and your uncle, Mr. Morrit—and well I know him, and a thorough gentleman he is—came to the Lodge last night, and has only left it a couple of hours ago."

"Ah, indeed," replied Frederick, thoughtfully; "I am glad you told me this, John."

"I thought it was right you should know, sir; and don't you be too downcast, Mr. Galton, no matter what rigs you may have been running: the Principal will never expel you, I am right sure of that, for let alone what a friend he is of your uncle's I never saw him take to any young gentleman as he has taken to you. You'll probably be convened—that's all."

"And what's that, John?" inquired Frederick, smiling.

"Why, you are politely invited to the Senate-house, and the Vice-chancellor sits in a big chair and gives you a bit of his mind, by way of a keepsake. Only, if you are too early for him, sir, don't sit in the big chair yourself, as Mr. Careless of our Hall did when *he* was convened, because it's considered a liberty."

The porter rubbed his hands with excessive enjoyment at this reminiscence of undergraduate audacity; but Mr. Galton was not so pleased. He was thinking how extremely unpleasant it would be to have to listen to the Vice-chancellor's remarks upon his visit to Oldborough, delivered from a chair of state in the Senate-house. They might expel him if they chose—it would only be beginning his literary life a year or two earlier—but convene him they should not. What other obsolete and curious punishments the authorities might use, he did not know; but he should weigh them well before submitting to them. Milton, it is true, was said to have been whipped at the buttery-hatch of his college; but then he had no such future before him as was promised to himself; the *Paternoster Porcupine* had not been started, and if it had been, the author of Paradise Lost could never have made his living by the periodicals. In this heroic frame of mind, our truant sought the Lodge, which he had never visited hitherto save as a friendly guest, and was ushered into Dr. Hermann's study.

The Principal was seated at his desk, and waved the young man to a seat at the further end of the room without rising. He looked very grave, and a little pompous, yet there was sorrow in the looks of the learned man, and in his tones also.

"I am very grieved, Mr. Galton—I regret exceedingly that your father's son should have behaved as you have done. I do not hesitate to say that I had begun to entertain for you an unusual regard. I have not been so concerned about an offender *in statu pupillari* for many years. But also, sir, I have scarcely ever before had to take cognizance of so grave an offence. The absenting yourself without leave from any authority of the college for three-and-forty hours—it is monstrous, it is unexampled. I must do my duty, sir; I must not suffer considerations of private friendship to weigh with me one feather."

"I am sure, sir, that you will only do what is right," observed Frederick, quietly. He had a genuine liking for Dr. Hermann, and was prepared to be as submissive—in behavior at least—as possible, since he knew that that sort of incense was very acceptable to the Principal of Minim Hall.

"Now look you here," continued the doctor, mollified by the young man's tone and air. "I do not ask where you have been, or what you have been doing, because there is no necessity for such a question. I know as well as if I had been told [Frederick bit his lips to prevent a smile] that you have been beguiled by some designing female. I am right, you see. What! I am *not* right? Do you mean to say that you did not leave Minim Hall the night before last in order to visit some—some young person of the opposite sex?"

"I do not deny that, sir," replied Frederick; "but I deny that she is a designing female. In the note I left behind me, addressed to yourself, I said I would explain all to you on my return without reserve."

"Hush! hold your tongue; be quiet!" whispered the doctor; then raising his voice, he added: "And you found your father well, did you? I am glad to hear it— There's somebody at the door, I think. Come in."

The door opened just sufficient space to admit the thin face of Mrs. Hermann. "I did not know you were engaged," she said: "you have somebody with you, have you not?"

"Mr. Galton is here," answered the doctor, dryly.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Euphemia, putting her head in a little way, and surveying Frederick as sightseers look at murderers in jail.

"Don't rise; pray don't rise. We thought we should never see you back again. What a very singular thing!"

"Madam," observed the doctor, gravely, "I must beg of you to retire. We are talking upon matters of a private nature."

"I wouldn't interrupt you for the world," replied the lady earnestly, her eyes reiterating their first inquiry. "We wonder what this young gentleman can have been at? I hope there is nothing serious, Principal?"

"Nothing at all, madam. Please to close the door."

Euphemia obeyed; but not until the rustle of her silk-gown had died away in the passage did the doctor resume the conversation. "Your letter," said he, "fell by mistake into my wife's hands. Having seen so much more of you than is customary in the case of other young men, she is naturally interested: it is most important, however, that the nature of your offence should not transpire. The shock to a person of Mrs. Hermann's sensitiveness would— Dear me, a designing female of inferior condition—and, goodness gracious, what a child! Why, do you know, young sir, that I did not marry, myself—I did not dream of marrying—until I was old enough to be your grandfather?"

Frederick was perfectly aware of this fact, but his features expressed the amount of astonishment that seemed to be demanded.

"I fell in love when I was a boy like you, of course, and I scrambled out of it again, not without some trouble.—But to leave Minim Hall without permission, for two days and nights, on account of being in love?" The doctor's breath was fairly taken away by the contemplation of this enormity, notwithstanding that it had presented itself upon one or two occasions before. "Why, do you know, Mr. Frederick Galton, that youths have been expelled from college for less crimes?"

"I have committed no crime, Dr. Hermann," quoth Frederick, boldly; "although my uncle has, doubtless, placed my conduct before you in its worst light. I have simply made up my mind to marry a certain young lady."

"Young lady?" exclaimed the Principal, arching his eye-brows.

"Young woman, then, if you please, sir," responded the young man with flashing eyes: "at all events, she will be my wife."

"But if you are expelled?" observed the doctor, tentatively, for he had begun to lose faith as respected this particular case in the very strongest medicines to be found in the university-chest—"what would you do then?"

"In all probability, I should marry her at once," replied the undaunted under-graduate.

"This is dreadful!" exclaimed the Principal, soliloquising. "This is worse than anything I ever heard of! The poor dear boy has lost his wits, and is simply mad to get married, that is all.—Now, listen to me, Galton, and remember who I am."

"I remember perfectly well, sir," said Frederick, smiling. "The Principal of my college, and a gentleman who has been very kind to me."

"And who wishes to be kinder still," replied the doctor, in a tone of genuine pity; "pray believe that and more, or you will think I have no right to tell you what I am about to tell. I have no son of my own, as you know, Frederick Galton; and protest my heart yearns towards you as though I were your father. My friend Morrit's relationship made me take some interest in you at the first, but I soon got to like you on your own account. Everybody likes you, lad. I do not say it to flatter you, but only because it is the truth. You are a favorite with women and with men. Euphemia has taken a great fancy to you, which is not usual with her, I assure you; very far from it. Miss de Lernay—you may well blush—has something more than a fancy for you, unless I am much deceived. Her father, an admirable judge of human nature, speaks of you with enthusiasm. As you advance in life, you will make a multitude of friends useful to you, and conducive to your happiness in every way; but by making a low marriage, you will paralyze this faculty of yours at the outset. You will see, too, many, many persons of the other sex, who might have made a far better wife than she with whom you are now infatuated, and would have been willing to have become so. Your circle of female acquaintance has hitherto been ridiculously narrow. Beware, lest hereafter you shall involuntarily make invidious comparisons when it is too late. Have you ever compared, for instance, this young person you have in your mind with Eugenie de Lernay?"

The unexpectedness of this inquiry would perhaps have been sufficient of itself to heighten Frederick's color, but not, as the doctor rightly concluded, to turn him scarlet. "I love a simple village maiden, who loves me in return, sir," returned Frederick, simply, after a little pause. "She is above me in many things—in purity, in unselfishness, in goodness of all kinds; and she is beneath me in nothing in which I am not also at least as inferior to Miss de Lernay. I answer your question, but I feel that I have no right to speak of that young lady in that way."

"Being a high-born damsel," remarked the doctor, "a lady of exquisite grace and manners, and the daughter of one who has been the ornament of courts, and has a right to look higher for an alliance for her than to the son of a village doctor. Some notion of this kind has probably crossed your mind, although never seriously, your affections being otherwise engaged."

"Well, really, sir, it seems absurd to give expression to such folly, but my imagination is not always under my control, and I confess that such an idea may have once or twice occurred to me, to my shame."

"Exactly," replied the doctor, coolly; "and I don't wonder either." Then he rose from his chair, opened the door, and looked into the passage, to be sure there were no listeners, locked it, and then resumed his seat with the gravest air. "I am going to tell you, Frederick Galton, a certain secret, which involves the honor of a noble family, but the telling of which will also, I believe, conduce to its happiness as to yours. It is a strange and terrible story, although true in every particular, and I know that it will be as safe in your custody as in my own; nay, safer; for it is impossible that you can have the same reason as now presses upon me to divulge it to another.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE LOST SISTER.

"I AM not a good story-teller, like Monsieur de Lernay," commenced Dr. Hermann, smiling sadly, "and I dare say I shall have now and then to refer to these faded leaves." He drew out from his desk a little packet of ancient letters, written in a female hand, and opened them reverently, one by one. "These are from my only sister, Emmeline, now with God, who despatched them to me from the very house where the circumstance I am about to relate took place, and at the very time of its occurrence. The date is some years ago, the locality is the south of France, and the *dramatis personœ* are chiefly a certain Count Lamotte and his two daughters. My sister, who was of a very independent spirit"—here the doctor sighed—"was governess to the younger of the children, Julie, and companion to the elder, Marguerite. She preferred to earn her own living in that manner—although Heaven knows there would always have been a home for her with me—and to do so abroad rather than at home. Count Lamotte was far from rich, nor was he liked by my sister; but smallness of salary and some other disagreeables were more than atoned for in her eyes by the friendship of Marguerite Lamotte. She was older than this girl by twenty years, old enough to be her mother; and as a mother she loved, she doted on her. It is hard to judge of beauty by description, but the loveliness of Marguerite must have been something greatly beyond the common. Fairer far, be sure, than the siren who is now beckoning you to shipwreck, ere you have left the very shore of life; fairer than Eugenie de Lernay, for my sister knew her, and has told me so; fairest, indeed, as it would seem, of womankind. They lived in a small country-house, apart from society, for the count had mingled with the best in more prosperous times, and it did not suit his pride to associate with the little land-owners about him. There was one immense chateau, indeed, in the neighborhood belonging to a great lord, but this was rarely occupied. Its master did not affect pastoral pleasures, and no tenant could be found rich enough to pay the rent of so princely a residence. So the days in Lozere passed very quietly under the shadow of the Cevennes and by the banks of the growing Garonne, so that one would have thought that the very last spot in France for romance to visit would have been that apparently unambitious household. I say apparently, because its head was secretly forever scheming and contriving how to regain his place in the gay world, which he had lost through his own extravagances, and was often away from the family in Paris for weeks and weeks.

"During that time his constant theme was the beauty of his daughter Marguerite—the Lily of Lozere, as the country people called her; and he was always regretting that he had not the money to bring her out in Paris, even for one season, in a manner befitting her rank and lineage. The girl herself would rally him playfully about this, complaining that no royal personage had sought her in marriage; but her father was very serious in his sorrow, and really looked upon her as a legitimate means of re-establishing the fortunes of his fallen house. They talk of these things in France in a more open manner than we do, although, perhaps, English fathers are not less selfish than French ones. Moreover, you must not suppose that the count did not love his daughter; he adored her with an affection as genuine as his pride itself. Now after my sister had resided with the Lamotte family nearly two years, and when Julie was about eleven years of age, and Marguerite nineteen, a great event had happened in the district: the Chateau Florac, which I have mentioned as having been so long without a tenant, was taken by a Monsieur Dubois. This gentleman must needs have possessed great wealth to have hired so noble a domain at all, but it was evident that he was a millionaire at least—a description of person less common in France than with us, and quite unknown in the simple district of Lozere—for, not content with the splendid furniture of the mansion, which was kept up in all respects as though its owner was resident, he entirely redecorated all the reception-rooms. This was the more wonderful, since it was understood that he had only taken the house upon a short lease.

"Moreover, he did not seem anxious that the neighbors should admire his magnificence. A fete or two—when all the fountains so long sealed up were set a-playing, and the gardens glowed with the hues of rarer flowers than had ever before graced their parterres—did indeed delight the neighbors upon Monsieur Dubois's first arrival. They wandered through the suites of elegant apartments, vainly endeavoring to price the costly furniture; they were admitted as a favor to gaze in at the divan which their host had erected close to his own chamber; and they were entertained with dishes the nature of which they could not guess at, but the taste whereof was ravishing to the palate. But these joys were few and fleeting. Greatly as the Lozere folks were impressed with Monsieur Dubois, the feeling was not reciprocal. He soon grew tired of their admiration, their dulness, their unsophisticated views of life, and shut himself up in the Chateau Florac with his secretary and his Nubian servants. Yes, Monsieur Dubois's personal attendants were two blacks of saturnine appearance, and a gentleman who was called his secretary, but who might have been termed his shadow. Wherever Monsieur Dubois moved, *he* moved; when he rode out, he accompanied him half a horse's head behind; when he drove he sat on his left hand; when he whispered soft nothings to the Lozere ladies at his entertainments, the secretary overheard them as certainly as the ears for which they were intended.

"This conduct did not seem to excite his master's indignation in the least, however embarrassing it might sometimes be to the third party. He seemed to acquiesce in it as one of the disadvantages of his own greatness. It was not becoming that a person with his rank and importance should ever be without some confidential attendant. Of Monsieur Dubois's importance, if wealth can confer it, there could be no doubt; but as to his rank, there were infinite uncertainty and suggestion. He professed to be a French gentleman who had passed much of his time in the East, since its luxury suited him, and even its system of misrule. He avowed himself a despot, and openly advocated a form of government under which a rich man might behave pretty much as he pleased. Laws, he said, were excellent in their way, but only adapted for the lower orders. His behavior, too, certainly gave the impression of a character born to be obeyed. Still, there were not wanting folks, and particularly after the fetes at the Chateau Florac had been discontinued, who averred that its new tenant was a *nouveau riche*, and who affected to detect provincialisms in his speech. Certainly his French was not Parisian; but this his supporters ascribed to the fact of his long residence in foreign lands, and protested that for their parts, they thought such little peculiarities made him all the more distinguished. As for his being dark, and, indeed, almost copper-colored, who that had so long experienced the burning suns of Egypt would not have suffered in his complexion? He had spent much time in dilettante examinations of the Pyramids, and explorations of Libyan burying-places—at that period a much more expensive and rare pursuit than at present; and what wonder was it if he had himself grown just a little like the mummies which he had exhumed! Several apartments in the Chateau Florac were dedicated to these spoils of the ancient dead. The painted boxes, with hieroglyphics and figures on them, which their owner could read like letter-press; the Egyptian deities, which crowded his shelves, with some dread history attached to each; the garlands of amaranth and the palm rods placed in vain by reverent hands upon their beloved departed tens of centuries ago: all these struck an awe in their beholders, from which the most splenetic of the once invited were not wholly exempt. How much more, then, must all these wonders have wrought with those who still enjoyed Monsieur Dubois's condescending hospitality.

"This gentleman had made a particular exception in his self-withdrawal from Lozere society in favor of the Lamotte family. The count was the only man who was capable of appreciating his conversation, and who could be his friend without sinking into a flatterer.

"If he was not wealthy, he had once been so, and life at the Chateau Florac was accepted and enjoyed by him in a natural manner, without that slavish gratitude which marks the dull and ill-bred when partaking of the hospitalities of the great. He behaved like a man who is well-pleased with his entertainment, but at the same time is conscious that he has brought his welcome with him.

"If the conversation in the divan after dinner was not always edifying, it was doubtless agreeable and well sustained; even the secretary's dumb and spiritless presence had no power to chill the lively eloquence of Lamotte, who, under the influence of good fare and good company, would have made himself pleasant to Pharaoh-Necho himself, smothered in seventy-fold bandages. Dubois, for the most part, let him talk on, throwing in an intelligent observation here and there, to convince him of his attention; and by this means won the regard of a guest whom it was not easy to dazzle by mere splendor.

"The count, who was rarely depressed at any time, positively appeared to grow young again under these prosperous circumstances, and blessed the hour when Monsieur Dubois first shone upon his obscurity.

"'What you came hither for, friend, unless guided by my good genius for my own special behoof, I cannot guess,' observed he to his entertainer one day, as they lounged as usual in the smoking apartment, each with a piece of amber in his mouth, and the bowl of his pipe at infinite distance. 'Why on earth did you take the Chateau Florac, when you could have hired the Tuilleries, had you been so disposed?'

"'Why did I go to Egypt, to be bitten with insects, to be poisoned with indifferent food, to be bored with idiotic interviews by stolid pashas?' returned Dubois. 'I have no reason for anything I do, but only whim. It is never any use asking me questions; I am a fool, but then I can afford to pay for my folly.'

"The host spoke with gayety, and the guest listened with a smile; yet the former meant very seriously that he did not wish to be cross-examined upon his motives, and the latter understood him to mean so. That is the great advantage of living in good society; we learn to perceive, with a sort of delicate attraction of repulsion, what others dislike, and avoid it without the least collision: the magnet informs us that we are cruising in the dangerous vicinity of some loadstone rock, and we put the helm about immediately. This admirable system of social intercourse has, however, its disadvantages. It is impossible to ask for explanations (except at the sword's point), or to inquire for what we call in England 'respectable references' as to character—even when one's own daughter's happiness is concerned in the matter. It had for some time become evident to Count Lamotte that Monsieur Dubois had set his affections upon Marguerite, notwithstanding his polite and frigid demeanor towards her; indeed, it was the absence of the light and jesting manner which the tenant of the chateau adopted with regard to other females, which chiefly made apparent his preference for the Lily of Lozere. It was for the better prosecution of his suit, as the count shrewdly suspected, that Monsieur Dubois had given up his great entertainments. Among the very few guests who were now invited, he could pay his attentions sufficiently often to Mademoiselle Lamotte without exciting remark.

"It is my sister who is speaking, of course," explained Dr. Hermann, parenthetically, looking at Frederick over the top of his gold spectacles, and then reverting to the open letters before him.

"I understood as much," observed the young man, smiling inwardly at the notion of the Principal of Minim Hall improvising a romance.

"And I think," added the doctor, "it would be more intelligible if I continued the story in her own words."

"I always made one of the party invited to the Chateau Florac, and was invariably treated with the greatest consideration by its master. Still, I never liked him, even on my own account, and still less as respected his behavior to my dear girl. He would address to her the most extravagant compliments with his features clothed in smiles, which he gave himself no trouble to render natural. If he had worn a mask it could not have been more evident that he was playing a part. At this, I was greatly indignant. Was this man so wealthy that he could afford to bid for a young gentlewoman, as for a mere picture, with his money only, and without the pretence even of ordinary admiration? He spoke of her indeed to me and to her father with the highest eulogies, but no trace of his entertaining such sentiments was to be observed in his manner. This, said the count, was the grand air, and should rather convince us of the high station which our host must always have occupied in life. Love, as understood by the lower orders, he assured me, was totally ignored in courts. He had made inquiries in Paris concerning Monsieur Dubois, and they had been eminently satisfactory. It was not indeed known exactly who he was; but the owner of the Chateau Florac had received from the ambassador of a foreign court the very highest testimonials regarding his tenant; while his command of money was evidently well-nigh boundless. 'My daughter,' said the count, 'will yet enjoy the position to which she was born, and for which nature has so eminently fitted her.' It was curious to see the Frenchman's pride overcoming his genuine paternal love, and to hear him talk in the same breath of Nature; but it was also very sad. Marguerite could not, of course, be ignorant of these aspirations of her father, and they gave her great concern. She, poor girl, was not, I daresay, without her ambition, but she had certainly no wish to marry Monsieur Dubois. She would not have liked him better, perhaps, even had he behaved towards her as a lover should; but it was impossible for any but an inhabitant of the Emerald Island to reciprocate an affection which evidently did not exist in the other party. When the offer of his hand was made at last, it was made to the count over the chibouques, and he was the first to communicate it to his daughter that same evening.

"'You will now have a husband every way worthy of you,' was the count's rather sweeping eulogy. 'I congratulate you, my Lily, with all my soul.'

"'Is it Monsieur Dubois, or his secretary, my father?' inquired Marguerite, smiling coldly.

"'My darling, what a question!' returned the count. 'What is the secretary to us?'

"'Nothing, father, that I know of; but he is everything to Monsieur Dubois—I protest that the gentleman who has done me the honor of proposing to marry me has never addressed me save in the presence of that attendant; and I honestly believe that the one has as great (and as little) regard for me as the other.'

"'The true and lasting love,' observed the count, demurely, 'only comes after marriage. So great a man as Monsieur Dubois—I have his word that he will settle a million of francs upon you; and see! he has begged our acceptance of one hundred thousand francs, in order that nothing may be wanting in the furnishing forth of my Lily, and that the family may make such an appearance in the meantime as may not disgrace such an alliance—so great a man, I say, dare not commit himself, even in love-making, lest by any accident he should meet with a rejection. Not, indeed, that I suppose any girl in France would be so mad, so blind as to say No—I may add, so undutiful; since no father could be otherwise than satisfied with the prospect of such a son-in-law. My Lily weeps at the idea of parting with her beloved parent, with her sweet Julie, with her dear and admirable Miss Hermann; but I am certain—yes, I feel certain that she is sensible of the greatness of the offer that has been made to her, and that she will accept it thankfully.'

"'Whatever pleases my father will plea—will seem right to me,' replied Marguerite with a great effort. And the count kissed her with devotion, and betook himself to his sleeping apartment, and the most charming dreams.

"But Marguerite Lamotte and I passed no such night: and not until the gray dawn touched the mountain tops, did she close her weeping eyes and sob herself to rest at last upon this bosom."

CHAPTER XX.

THE KIDNAPPERS.

"NOTHING more passed between the count and his daughter concerning her engagement with Monsieur Dubois. It was silently acquiesced in by all parties. It was fortunate, perhaps, that the bridegroom-elect was not exacting as to public demonstrations of affection; while as to private ones, the opportunity never occurred. The inevitable secretary—calm, imperturbable, dull—dogged the footsteps of his master as an engaged man, even more than he had done so when he was fancy free.

"'Monsieur Barbette will not accompany you on your marriage tour, I conclude, Dubois?' said the count one day, with the nearest approach to a sarcasm that he had ever hazarded to his future son-in-law.

"'Most certainly he will,' Monsieur Dubois had answered. 'My travelling-carriage is built for three inside.'

"The count shrugged his shoulders until they touched the tips of his ears.

"'Everybody to their liking, my friend. Since your ideas are so peculiar, it is useless to ask you to take a French valet, or at least a white man (Monsieur Dubois's dark face turned several degrees more dusky), instead of your Nubians; for my daughter's maid, Kathleen, an ignorant Irish girl, but true as steel, has taken the greatest horror of them.'

"'And what has your daughter's maid to do with my Nubians?" inquired Monsieur Dubois, coldly.

"'Nothing; except so far that as they are to be fellow-travellers—'

"'Fellow-travellers!' ejaculated Monsieur Dubois, with amazement. 'Where? Whither? What do you mean?'

"'You do not suppose that *my* daughter—Marguerite Lamotte—will leave my house as your bride without an attendant?' returned the count with laborious distinctness. 'I do not know much of Monsieur Dubois, but I should hope it was not necessary to point out to him the absolute necessity of such an arrangement.' The tenant of the Chateau Florac turned livid, as the count supposed, with rage; but the blood of the Lamottes was roused in the latter gentleman. 'Thousand devils!' continued he, 'you cannot stir without your secretary, and yet you will not permit my daughter to-travel in a manner befitting her station!'

"There was a dry, husky cough, such a cough as is confided to the hand before the mouth is opened for a falsehood, and the secretary, who had entered the room without the least noise, was heard to remark: 'Make no difficulty, my master, pray; let us take the young woman also by all means.'

"'We will take her, then. Kathleen shall accompany madame,' said Dubois, hurriedly.

"'Sir,' returned the count, with a lofty air, 'I thank you; I feel under the greatest obligations—to your secretary.'

"A lasting coolness sprang up between Monsieur Lamotte and his intended son-in-law out of this trifling matter; but it unhappily never went so far as to disturb the matrimonial project. The advantages upon the side of the count were too great and immediate to be relinquished; and, indeed, I believe he had already spent a portion of that large sum in ready money with which Monsieur Dubois had presented him. The day of the nuptials was appointed, and it drew nigh with frightful speed; this was not that the intervening time was a happy one—far from it; but because it was precious to us all, and incalculably so, with reference to that which lay beyond. The father knew that he had sold his daughter to a stranger without a heart; the girl herself had not one single ray of hope to cheer her in the contemplation of her future. I understood the wretchedness of both of them, and shared it. My Marguerite was proud to most persons, but not to me. She did not attempt for an instant to conceal from me her utter misery, one half of which only was caused by the thought of becoming Madame Dubois, the other half by the thought of leaving home. All that she loved, all that she knew in the wide world was comprised within the walls of our little house; she had no other relatives save Julie and her father, no other friend but me.

"Her husband was about to carry her away at once to what seemed to her a distant part of the earth.

"It was the very time, he said, for a tour in the East; and a steam-yacht was already waiting at Marseilles, to carry them up the Mediterranean.

"'If I could only die at once,' cried she, 'instead of lingering on, it may be, for months of misery, how thankful should I be! What is life to me with'—she could not even pronounce his name, but only shuddered. 'How can I live away from all that is dear to me!' She looked forth from the window upon the beloved home-scene, the valley still rich with green, though the winter was far advanced, and the Cevennes were white with snow. 'O why, just Heaven! did this man come here to turn my happiness to sorrow? I did not know how happy, how blessed I was—and now it is too late! Emmeline, watch over Julie when I am gone. Let her never thus be sacrificed. One sister is enough to be offered up to Mammon. How wretched, too, is my poor father; and when I am gone, it will be worse for him. Do not let him reproach himself, dear friend; comfort him all you can. Ah, if we were but rich!"

Thus did the dear girl outpour her heart on the very night before her wedding-day. The ceremony was as imposing as the count could make it. Monsieur Dubois had counselled, nay, had entreated that all things should be conducted in as private a manner as possible; but his father-in-law for once had overruled him. Since the affair was scarcely a love-match, it should at least reflect credit upon the family, and fill the bosoms of his neighbors with unappeasable envy.

"The congratulations he received from all the guests were of the most extravagant description.

"'The young madame would be nothing less than a princess,' they said. And a princess she looked. Her bridal attire was splendid and costly enough for any rank, and she moved with all the stateliness of a queen. Not a touch of color could be traced in her noble features; yet she never looked more beautiful—more like the Lily of Lozere.

"To the spectators, she seemed only haughty, stiffened with native pride, and sudden elevation to fortune; while in truth she was only *frozen over*—a glittering show, beneath which lay a breaking heart and unutterable wretchedness.

"When Julie put a bouquet into her gloved hands, I saw them tremble, and the fingers clutch the flowers rather than close upon them; but she never gave way; no, not even when the good-by came, and her father's own eyes glistened with sorrow and secret remorse. Only as the travelling-carriage drove to the door, she looked round with a sharp anxious glance for Kathleen, who, with a nod of loving reassurance, seated herself upon the rumble.

"Inside, with his back to the horses, sat the inevitable secretary, at which arrangement the good folks of Lozere could not conceal their unsophisticated astonishment.

"'Faix and it's myself that's glad he is not here,' remarked Kathleen in reply to one who suggested that he should have been her travelling-companion; 'and likewise that they have not set me by one of them Nubians.'

"This faithful creature entertained the most honest and profound dislike not only for the Nubians, and the secretary, but for her new master also, whom, she went so far as to tell me, she believed to be the Father of Evil himself, very inadequately disguised. Her grounds for this conviction were manifold; but she mainly relied upon his peculiar color and ugliness; his keeping a familiar—the secretary; and his disinclination even so much as to take the hand of that innocent and spotless lady her mistress within his own. 'The devil, we all know,' said she, 'or at least all we good Catholics do, Miss Emmeline—the devil hates holy water, and for some similar reason this black gentleman dare not approach Miss Marguerite—thanks be to Heaven! Why, nobody that was a *man* could have helped falling in love with such a darling at the very first sight; and here he has been courting her these three months, and never ventured to put his ugly lips to her beautiful brow: that is not what *I* call courting, Miss Emmeline; and you may take my word for it that there's something uncanny about such work. Perhaps he's waiting until she does something wrong, before he dare get fond of her: he'll have to wait a weary time for that, for Miss Marguerite's an angel. But anyway, I'll keep my eye upon him. *I'm* not too good, Heaven be praised, to be a match for anybody.'

"And, indeed, Kathleen was my only hope in this calamity, as she was the sole prop and stay of her unfortunate young mistress.

"Where the count had engaged her, I cannot tell; but he had certainly been most fortunate in securing her as an attendant for his daughters, the younger of whom she had had the charge of almost from infancy. Nothing but her devotion to the family, and to Marguerite in particular, would have induced her to make one of the travelling household of Monsieur Dubois ; but having once made up her mind to accompany her mistress, I felt the strongest confidence that Kathleen would never desert her. It seemed little enough protection for a poor girl in such a position ; but Marguerite herself clung to it with touching tenacity, so as almost to cause, as we have seen, a quarrel between her father and Monsieur Dubois ; and in the end it turned out of the utmost service.

"A loving heart that is also brave, can accomplish much for the object of its affections and against great odds. Kathleen Maloney looked upon it in this light, and could be relied on to overcome almost everything except foreign languages. Although she had lived in France so many years, she discoursed in the French tongue almost as imperfectly as an Indian ayah speaks English, and would invariably address her remarks to a stranger, even in Lozere, in pure Milesian, in the forlorn-hope that he might be a compatriot.

"Upon the arrival of this singularly-composed wedding-party at Marseilles, which they reached on the same evening, the happy pair, or rather trio—for the secretary never left them—sat down at their hotel to a splendid repast, of which, however, the poor bride could not swallow a single mouthful. While thus engaged, her scarcely less unhappy attendant wandered out into the bustling town. Perhaps she had a natural passion for sight-seeing, and understanding that they were to leave the port the next morning, she opined that no time was to be lost in reconnoitring ; or perhaps the faithful creature thought that she might acquire some knowledge which might be made useful to her beloved mistress. She turned her steps towards the quay, where the great fleet of shipping lay as distinguishable under the clear starlit sky as in the daytime, and strove to guess at which among them all the vessel might be which was fated to carry them so soon to unknown shores. Even France appeared like home in comparison to such a dreaded bourne.

"'Can you tell me, young man,' inquired she of one with a good-natured face, and appearance a little superior to the maritime population thereabouts, 'which of these boats here is the steam-yacht bound for the East to-morrow morning? I am a stranger here myself entirely,' added she in pathetic apology.

"'That's clear,' answered the man, holding out his hand, which Kathleen seized in a rapture. 'Why, who on earth would have thought of meeting an Irishwoman in Marseilles' port, within an hour or two of midnight too! It is neither right nor safe, my lass, that you should be here.'

"'Leave Kathleen Maloney alone for taking care of herself,' replied the undaunted girl; 'although, indeed, if I wanted help you're just the boy to give it me: it was your kind English eyes which made me speak to you, sir. And now, pray tell me which is the steam-yacht, that I may look upon it, and see whether it is like a coffin outside, as it should be, for it will carry me and my dear mistress both to our deaths, I know.'

"'But where do you expect it to take you in the meantime, my good girl? I thought you said it was bound for the East?'

"Ay, to Egypt or some such place: to the house of bondage, as it has well been written; a land full of taskmasters, and wickedness too, if them Nubians came from it, I'll warrant. Is that the ship, sir?

"The stranger pointed towards a trim-looking vessel, built evidently for speed, but with much more external decoration about it than was usual: the port-holes were larger—more like windows—and neatly painted, and its appearance altogether was livable, and even luxurious.

"'It is a pretty thing enough,' observed Kathleen, mournfully; 'but for my part, I would rather be set on board a coal-barge, with its figure-head pointing towards old Ireland.'

"'And that's a pleasant thing to say,' returned the young fellow, laughing, 'when I myself am engineer of that same steam-yacht, and you will enjoy the great advantage of my society upon the voyage.'

"'What! Do you belong to her? You, an honest Englishman. Then praised be the saints! But, arrah, jewel, tell me all about her, do; and who is this Monsieur Dubois, who owns her, and his secretary, Monsieur Barbette; for you cannot guess how much of comfort or misery may hang upon your answer.'

"'Well, the fact is, it's secret service. You see I am bound not to tell my employer's secrets; but I may say this much, since it is known to every sailor in Marseilles, that Monsieur Dubois is no more her owner than I am. The *Irene* belongs to the Porte.'

"'Oh, it's a Marseilles boat, is it? Then I suppose Monsieur Dubois has only hired it?'

"'Nay, nay, girl,' returned the young man, greatly amused; 'it is the Sublime Porte that I mean. She belongs to the Sultan.'

"'What! the Grand Turk?' cried Kathleen, clasping her hands. 'Mother of Heaven, this is dreadful! What can it all mean? Look you, sir,' pleaded she, while tears rolled down her cheeks, 'I have not a friend in all this town, except my dear young mistress, and she has no other friend than I. She has been married this day to Monsieur Dubois, whom she hates, and I hate; and what is much more singular is, that Monsieur Dubois does not love her, never addresses her even, save in the presence of Monsieur Barbette. There is something strange and cruel about it all. There is some unspeakable wretchedness overhanging my dear Miss Marguerite. Oh, sir, if you have a mother, a sister, pity us! Tell me what this man is, and to what misfortunes we are hurrying.'

"'I have a mother and two little sisters at home,' returned the young man, deeply moved, 'and for their sakes I will do your bidding. If I do lose my situation through it, what matters? While wits and hard work command their wages, Charles Perling is not a man to starve.'"

Frederick started from his seat. "Charles Perling!" exclaimed he.

"Yes, that is the name," continued Dr. Hermann; "that is certainly the name, although the ink in which it is written has much faded. Did you ever know him? He must have been a fine young fellow."

"No, sir; I never knew him; but I have heard of him from those who loved him dearly. Pray go on, sir."

"'God will never let you starve,' returned Kathleen, earnestly, 'if you will only help us in our need.'

"'As to help, my good girl, you shall have the best that I have to offer, though I am afraid it will be worth but little; but I will at least warn you of your danger. The government which I serve is not like other governments; there is always something tricky and underhand going on, either for or against the master. He is a vicious and abandoned prince, and such have always wicked ministers ready to do their will for pay. Monsieur Dubois is one of these, and Monsieur Barbette is another. Now, answer me truly one question. Is your young mistress very beautiful?'

"'She is more lovely than any human creature I ever saw,' returned Kathleen, slowly; 'fit to be an angel, just as she is.'

"'Then it's my opinion,' returned the young man, gravely, 'that her marriage with Dubois is all a mockery. He and Barbette are carrying her to Constantinople to make their bargain with the Sultan; they have been applying—the scoundrels!—their Circassian principles to France, and they mean to get a high price for their western wife, no doubt.'

"For a moment or two, the keen instincts of Kathleen quite deserted her; the magnitude of the impending danger, the unimaginable wickedness of the plot deprived her of all power of reflection, and blank despair took the place of terror. But revived by the water which Charles Perling sprinkled on her cheeks, and still more by his soothing and friendly tones, she was gradually enabled to look the lowering future in the face.

"'You will not suffer this great wrong to be done,' said she, solemnly; 'you will help me all you can?'

"'I will, I will,' returned he; 'but I do not see what is to be done. You are the head, I am only the hands.'"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MORAL OF IT.

"'I WILL go home and warn my mistress,' said Kathleen, after a little thought; 'come with me, and I will show you the window of her chamber. She will inform the landlord of the hotel, and he will not dare but be on our side. We shall return, thank Heaven, and my dear young mistress, the Lily of Lozere, they call her—will see her home once more.'

"'But if the landlord disbelieves you?' urged the engineer. 'The whole story will seem impossible—a mere fiction. Dubois is rich, which goes a great way with landlords. What will you do then?'

"'Nay, it is what will *you* do then?' returned Kathleen, solemnly. 'You alone, in that case, must be our trust. You will not desert us, because you believe in a God. Have you no friends here—not your own messmates, but others—among the Marseilles folks, I mean?'

"'I have acquaintances: we foreigners,' replied the young man, 'find it hard to make our way to people's hearts. But I know a dozen men, Frenchmen, who if I told them what we know—what is going on in their own town here— But that would never do; they would breed a riot.'

"'What of that?' cried Kathleen, eagerly. 'Let them burn the town down, so that I save Miss Marguerite. Look you, there is a drinking-house just opposite to our hotel. Take them there and treat them. Here is money —or I can bring you thrice as much.'

"'Put up your purse, my good girl,' returned the other; 'I am not wealthy, but I can afford to stand treat upon such an occasion. No true Marseillaise will refuse supper and brandy. Well, I will give my entertainment at the wine-shop opposite.—What then?'

"'Listen: I will show you the window; watch, and if you see my face at it, bring out your friends—to look at the moon, the state of the weather, or to smoke—no matter upon what pretence. Then if you see me wave my handkerchief—thus—tell them that in their native place, in Marseilles, a young girl, their own countrywoman, is being plotted against by a wicked knave, who is carrying her off to sell her. Then let the landlord, since he has been deaf to us, hear *them;* let him look to his windows, his furniture. He will soon be won over to our side, I warrant him. And oh! sir, if you happen in the turmoil to come across Dubois or Barbette—they're sure to be together—will you remember what villany they intended, and what my poor mistress has suffered?'

"'Ay, that will I,' cried the young man, with vehemence. 'I will strike once, and not lightly, for this Lily; and once, my good lass, for the shamrock of old Ireland, which is a very pretty flower too. The gendarmes will arrive to a certainty, and I shall be sent to prison; but what of that? By-the-by, why has it never struck you to inform *them* in the first instance—to send for the police at once?'

"'Ah, no,' replied Kathleen, gravely. 'The Palers are a bad lot entirely all the world over. Sure they're always for the rich people against us poor folks. They would let this Dubois slip through their fingers if he only greased their palms with enough golden ointment. And besides, if we applied to the law, the whole matter must be made public, and if this can be avoided, so much the better: Miss Marguerite would die of shame. I have good hope, too, that there need not be a riot after all. This Dubois is a coward, or my name is not Kathleen Maloney.'

"'Very well, Kathleen; I am off to invite my friends to this entertainment, since there is no time to be lost. In half an hour you may count upon me to have collected a score of as hairbrained fellows as can be picked up in the port. Show your face and it will draw the lot of them out of doors; wave your handkerchief, and then woe to the windows! "We will be revenged! Burn, fire, kill, slay," as I read once in a stage-play belonging to my little sister Jane.'

"'Oh, sir, if you suffer for our sake, she will never forgive me, and I shall never forgive myself.'

"'You do not know my sister Jane,' replied Charles Perling, simply, 'or you would know she would forgive anything. I am not sure about her countenancing a riot, indeed,' soliloquized he aloud, 'but I don't see any other way that promises better.' Then he looked at the steam-yacht, and shook his curly Saxon locks regretfully. 'I do not think I shall ever set foot upon *your* deck again, bonny bark. But no matter; *au revoir*, Kathleen.'

"'Sure if it's a kiss you're asking for, you shall have it,' answered Miss Maloney, with a little sob. 'And if I can remember your name, which I am but a bad hand at, you shall never be forgotten in my prayers, you broth of a boy.'

"The young engineer accompanied the girl to the hotel, and she pointed out to him the supper-room, which was still brilliantly illuminated.

"'My mistress is there still,' said she, pointing to the shadow of a drooping head: 'therefore, one of those two will be the window at which I will stand.'

"Charles Perling, upon his part, secured an apartment at the café opposite, which commanded the desired view.

"Upon entering her hotel, Miss Kathleen Maloney gave certain orders as emanating from her master, which, although they must have evoked some surprise, were received with polite acquiescence. The servants of gentlemen travelling *en prince* are rarely disobeyed. Then going to the chamber of her mistress, she selected some articles of apparel, money, and a bonnet and shawl, and placed them in a bundle on a table that stood on the landing at the top of the stairs. After completing these arrangements, she entered the first-floor chamber, occupied by her betters, without the least hesitation or *mauvaise honte;* but it was certainly a great relief to her to find her beloved Miss Marguerite sitting there all alone.

"'They have gone out,' observed her mistress, gloomily, in answer to her look of inquiry, 'and, I think, to look for you. They seem to be greatly alarmed at your continued absence. You seem to have quite awakened Monsieur Barbette's interest, Kathleen,' added the poor girl, smiling sadly.

"'Troth, and I think I shall do that before I've done with him!' responded the other, vehemently. 'They're just two worthless scoundrels, the pair of them. Ah, mavourneen! my lily! my beauty! what a snare has been spread for you, baited with glittering gold! Into what a pit of infamy has your own father been unconsciously hurrying you, in spite of yourself!'

"'Say nothing against my father, Kathleen,' replied Marguerite, calmly; 'he did all for the best. You need not remind me of my degradation; it is sufficiently present to me every instant. I am a bond-slave—sold for gold.'

"'Yes; but not to this man, my child, but to some other. Your marriage has been a mere trap—a lie. You are a slave, indeed, if you once set foot in that vessel to-morrow morning. Monsieur Dubois is a—"

"'Is a what, woman?' asked the hissing tones of the secretary, who had entered in his usual noiseless fashion, and by another door.

"'A kidnapper!' exclaimed Kathleen, boldly, stepping backward to the window. 'An emissary of a wicked prince; a disgrace to the name of man! Now I know why there has not been even a pretence of regard for this dear girl, and why you—*you* and the other villain never lose sight of one another. In an infamous partnership, you purchased her of her foolish though fond father.'

"Marguerite, speechless with anguish and terror, still made a gesture of dissent.

"'There!' cried the secretary, in a tone of triumph, 'madame herself, you see, denies these absurd calumnies. What dreams, what inventions are these? Fortunately, here is Monsieur Dubois himself come to reassure her. Sir, your wife's attendant has, I believe, taken leave of her senses.'

"Certainly, to look at Kathleen, as she stood, with fiery eyes and crimson cheeks, denouncing her master and his friend, this did not seem an unlikely supposition. Marguerite gazed on her with yearning indeed, but with distrust—with a sort of affectionate pity. 'If she *be* mad,' said she, 'it is no wonder; and as for me, oh Heaven! I would that I could be mad also.'

"'Nay, mistress, darling mistress, do not *you* turn from me, or mad indeed I shall go. I tell you these men are kidnappers. If I say false, let them send for the master of the hotel; let us hear what he has to say to wretches who—Stand off, accursed thief, or I shall save the hangman trouble!'

"Dubois had made a step forward as if to seize her; but she snatched up a knife from the supper-table, and he fell back before its shining point, with his lips as white as ashes.

"'It is quite impossible, madame,' stammered he, 'to pay any attention to this woman's ravings. What would the *maître d'hôtel*—a most respectable person doubtless—think of us, who come here accompanied by such an attendant! She has been drinking at the café opposite.'

"The café opposite! How little he knew what hope he awakened by these words! They must be there by this time surely—some of them at least. She threw the sash up with one hand, still menacing Dubois with the knife in the other.

"'If you call aloud,' said the secretary, producing a small pistol from his breast-pocket, 'if you utter a sound that can be heard in the street, the moment in which you do so will be your last.'

"'And do you think that *I* fear death like this trembling coward here?' replied Kathleen, scornfully. 'It is for him and you, for whom hell gapes, to fear; but not for me. Look forth—back, on your lives!—not from this window, but the other—do you see those men there?—ten, eleven, twelve—and there are more to come. They are there for a purpose. See how they look up this way! They know what is doing here; they have sworn to prevent it. If I do but move my hand, there will be such a riot here as shall be heard of far and wide, and for which your master himself will have to give account. *You* (she turned on Dubois like a tiger-cat whose young are threatened)—you poltroon, would you like to be torn asunder by a mob? Approach me or my mistress, either of you, by a single step, move a limb, a finger, be otherwise than as men turned into stone, and as sure as the stars are in heaven, it shall be so!'

"She leaned out of the window, still keeping her gaze upon her foes, and with a clear and distinct utterance exclaimed: 'We are coming down, friends—both of us, this instant. If we are not with you in two minutes *come and fetch us;* you will know who have detained us!' Then seizing the terrified Marguerite by her cold, bloodless hand, she led her swiftly from the room, and pausing only to take the bundle which she had placed on the landing, descended to the hall, and bidding the porter open the door, was in the street with her precious charge, shawled and with her bonnet on, in less time than it takes to tell it.

"'The carriage waits, madame,' said he, 'according to orders.' And at the corner of the street stood the vehicle in question, with four horses, and the postillions in their saddles.

"Charles Perling was about to rush out from among his wondering companions, but Kathleen stopped him with her warning finger. It pointed towards the window of the room he had been so lately watching, and he understood her to mean that he should remain unrecognized by his foiled employers.

"'See that we are not followed,' cried she, eagerly; 'that is all that is necessary. And may God bless you for your good deed this night.'

"The two girls entered the carriage, and the whips cracked in a very *feu de joie*, and away whirled the wheels over the stones. The birds had escaped out of the snare of the fowler, though their tender hearts were palpitating yet with the extremity of their danger!

"The two travellers knew nothing of the time at which the trains started northward, so they pursued the road for several stages through the night, and in the early morning, at an intermediate station on the line, they took the train towards home—after what an experience of the world that lay beyond it!"

The President of Minim Hall here folded up the manuscript from which he had been reading—at first in a more disjointed fashion than our own method of narration; but during the latter part, just as we have given it—and looked inquiringly towards his auditor.

"It is a strange, sad story, sir," observed Frederick. "Is it true?"

"It is all true, my lad. My poor sister had some little talent for weaving what she had to tell into the narrative form; and I found this statement, which I know to be a correct one from other sources, among her papers after death. It was never intended for any other eye but her own. It seems odd enough that she should have cultivated her gift in this manner to no purpose."

"I can understand that quite easily, sir," replied the young man, thinking of an instance of the same kind very much within his own experience. "But does not the writer say what eventually became of the Lily of Lozere?"

"She died, my lad, of a broken heart," observed the Principal, sadly. "She could not bear the shame of the plot that had been laid for her, or (what is more likely) the degradation which she saw her father felt upon her account. We can easily imagine what was said by the vulgar and malicious, and how those who envied the count's apparent good fortune enjoyed the disgraceful failure of his hopes. He must have known, too, that his own ambition and desire of self-aggrandizement had brought this evil upon his house: if he had not made such a public boast of his daughter's beauty in Paris, the wicked scheme of Monsieur Dubois would never have been concocted. His days were embittered by self-reproach as well as by wounded pride; the home at Lozere was not the old home. The Lily languished and died, nor did the faithful Kathleen long survive her."

"And was no effort made, sir, to punish that pair of scoundrels?" exclaimed Frederick, indignantly. "Was it shown that the Sultan had any complicity in the infamy?"

"I am afraid it was," returned the Principal, gravely. "The count at least always affirmed that it was. The Turkish ambassador had himself spoken highly of Dubois to the proprietor of the Chateau Florac. Lamotte would have moved heaven and earth to gain redress—vengeance. He appealed to the king himself in the matter; but I know not what steps were taken. It was not thought politic that France and the Sublime Porte should have a quarrel at that time, I believe. At all events, the count cannot now hear the name of Louis Philippe mentioned without an execration; and he went into voluntary exile from his native country, disdaining, as he said, to live under such a truckling prince."

"I see it all now, sir," exclaimed Frederick, suddenly: "Count Lamotte is Monsieur de Lernay. I remember the scowl that crossed his face when I happened, upon the first night I met him here, to speak of Louis Philippe. I remember how you trod upon my feet when I mentioned Constantinople."

"You are right," returned the Principal, quietly. "But I did not tell you this history merely to warn you of what was dangerous ground; that would be no sufficient excuse for such a breach of confidence. I told you of this disgrace that has happened to the De Lernays, in order that you may not think a daughter of that house immeasurably beyond you, and out of your reach, as you have doubtless deemed her to be. Any great alliance, to which her birth and beauty well entitle her, has been rendered impossible to Eugenie, and her father is not likely a second time to be too ambitious in his choice of a son-in-law."

The Principal rose like one who has concluded his peroration, and does not wish to mar it by more words.

"Really, sir," stammered Frederick, perceiving that some reply was expected of him, "I scarcely see how the circumstance you speak of can concern *me;* but I thank you, most unfeignedly, for the trouble you have taken upon my account. I shall, of course, accept the secret you have confided to me as a sacred trust; it will never pass these lips, you may be sure. Nor shall I ever behold Monsieur de Lernay or his daughter without remembering the sorrow and undeserved affront that has been put upon them, and taking care to treat them with all the more gentleness, and—and—homage."

The Principal held out his hand—and not merely the two fingers of it, which were generally offered to the undergraduate world. "I have not expelled you this time," said he, smiling: "but remember (here he looked towards the door, and raised his voice) that I have been obliged to give you a most severe and lengthy reprimand, and you promise me that you never again surreptitiously leave college, even to visit your good father."

Frederick Galton laid his hand upon the door handle, but discreetly forebore to turn it until the rustling of silk, which had once more made itself audible during the last few minutes, had hurriedly died away.

"I thank you very much, sir," said he, with emotion, as he finally took leave.

"God bless you, my lad, and take you in his good keeping!" was the Principal's grave rejoinder. Then he put the faded letters reverently away into his desk, and locked it; but his features, now he was left alone, wore a look of dissatisfaction and sorrow. "I have done it for the best," soliloquised he; "and yet I may have been doing harm. Perhaps nature is the best guide in these matters, after all. But what a clever fellow Morrit is! 'Gentleness' and 'homage;' that was the very thing his uncle foresaw would come of this. Poor lad, poor lad!"

CHAPTER XXII.

M. DE LERNAY'S SECOND SON-IN-LAW.

THE May term at Camford being one of the pleasantest epochs of human existence to that part of our race who are undergraduates, is proportionably fleeting; yet it merges, not into sorrow, or any dull routine, such as clogs us old fellows of the work-a-day world, but—into the Long Vacation: the latter period being one of quite uninterrupted enjoyment, extending over four months at the least. Ah, youth-time, why are thy blessings thus heaped together, when, more sparely used, they might gladden one a whole life long! Ah, golden hours, why fled you in such flocks, so that not one remains, but all about us now are leaden-winged, and most unmusical! Only a week remained of Camford festivities, and then the sacred place would become a waste, inhabited only by superannuated dons, and servants in their master's clothing; while the young gentlemen themselves would have "gone down," some home to the bosom of their admiring families; some, under the pleasant pretence of a reading-party, into the picturesque fastnesses of their native land; and some, abroad, to behold men and cities, and to amass private collections of pipes, of more or less originality and beauty.

There was a long discussion at Casterton, between Dr. Galton and his brother-in-law, as to what should be done with Frederick during this interval. His sudden descent upon Oldborough, vehemently reprobated by his uncle, but not inexcusable in the eyes of his father, had seriously frightened both these relatives. That the boy should spend his summer at home, within half-a-day's journey of the village siren, was not to be thought of. The doctor entertained a very ill opinion of foreign countries as a lounge for youth; and the curate had a similar distrust of reading-parties at the Lakes, or elsewhere. "Even mathematical men," said he, "have been known to fall in love upon such expeditions, wherein, indeed, there is commonly little else to do. It is most important that Frederick should have plenty to occupy his mind; his idleness is Miss Perling's opportunity, you may depend upon that. Now, what do you say to his passing the Long Vacation in town?"

"In London!" exclaimed the good doctor. "What! my boy in London, and all alone? Where is he to lodge? Who is to look after him? The temptations of town, my dear Robert, are very great; and although I have done my very best to instil into his mind good resolutions, and so forth, yet—"

"Well," interrupted the curate, testily, "I confess I am not afraid of the temptations. The lad has a virtuous attachment, you see (the doctor winced), and that will probably prove his safeguard; and if it doesn't, why, the attachment cannot be very strong, so that there is some comfort in either case. Moreover, I understand, from Hermann, that the De Lernays are going to town for the season. Our impressionable Frederick is not without a *penchant* for this Miss Eugenie, it seems. If you put a mopsticks into petticoats, and let it wear a becoming cap, I believe the lad would fall down and worship it."

"A French woman and a Catholic," sighed the poor doctor, without paying any attention to the curate's last remark. "How very unfortunate our dear Frederick has been in his early objects of devotion!"

"Very," returned Mr. Morrit, dryly; "but he is at least improving. Miss de Lernay is a person of good birth and education; her father is a man of mark, and there is even a little money, I hear. But I contend that we are altogether wrong in looking upon either of these affairs so seriously. By the end of the Long Vacation, I trust he will have fallen in love with several other young women."

"Robert, don't talk like that," returned the doctor, gravely. "God knows I never loved any one but his mother, my sweet Ellen."

The curate bowed his head, and was silent for a little. Any mention of his sister always moved him; he had not only that reverence for her memory which Dr. Hermann entertained for the writer of those letters he preserved so carefully, but a sacred love. Ellen Morrit had been to her brother the impersonation of all that was good in women; whenever he thought or spoke contemptuously of the sex, he always made an exception of her in his own mind. She had been his home companion for years; the ornament of his bachelor cottage; the manager of his little household; his comforter in many troubles which he had confided to no other bosom.

To the doctor she had been all this, and more, far more, although for a shorter time. So the two men kept silence, thinking each of the same fair young creature, who, though so long dead, was yet such a strong bond between them, that when they thought of her, they straightway loved one another.

"William, my dear William," said the curate, "you and Frederick are not alike at all."

"No, indeed," returned the doctor, simply; "I am glad to say that is very true. He takes after her, not me. So fair, so kind; so endeared to all about him; so tender-hearted, and, I think, so pure."

"Yes, and that is what makes his position such a dangerous one. If he were like young Meyrick—I mean, if he was more commonplace, and even somewhat vicious—we should have no such difficulties with him as these. To be the son of a genius, is, we well know, a deplorable circumstance; but to have a genius for one's own son, is very embarrassing too. To a certain extent, you must give him his head, my good friend, otherwise he will kick himself clean out of the shafts and harness."

"What is that you propose doing?" asked the doctor, wearily; not, indeed, that the subject did not interest him, but because all his air-built castles of having his son by his side for life, out of reach of temptations, and the punishments that follow upon yielding to them, seemed already dissolved, and his house, as it were, made a second time desolate. "What is it you would do with my boy?"

"Well, the best course, as it appears to me, in order to wean him from this unhappy attachment, is to let him have his own way as respects literature. Let his mind be exercised in the manner most agreeable to himself, and it will thereby be kept from love-sick longings. The ambition of a magazine writer, it is true, is contemptible enough, but it is better than aspirations after a wheelwright's daughter. As to Frederick's being looked after in the sense you are thinking of in London, that is out of the question; but I will write to Gory—to Jonathan Johnson, I mean—by this day's post, and if there is no room for him under his own roof, he will see that he is respectably lodged. I will get him to promise that the lad shall be always welcome; I think he will do that much for me, for the sake of old times, so that there need be no excuse for Frederick's falling into loose company. Then, as for his employing himself, after the wished-for fashion, the editor of the *Porcupine* will be able to put him in the way of doing that. It is not a promising plan, I acknowledge, but I can hit on no better."

"Then he will not come home—to Casterton—at all?" said the poor doctor, sighing as he thought of the weary time that had elapsed since the lad's departure, and the long, lonely summer before him.

"Certainly not," returned Mr. Morrit, distinctly. "My dear William, that would be madness indeed."

Upon the very last day of term, and within a week after the above conversation, Frederick Galton received the following letter:—

"MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,—I have been appointed your Mentor, so henceforth revere me accordingly. You are to come up to town for the 'Long,' and to be lodged in my neighborhood—'under my eye,' as your uncle calls it. This is to make a pupil of you indeed. We will cultivate literature together upon a little oatmeal, with Percival Potts. You only associate his name at present with your rejected communications, but I hope you will be better friends on acquaintance. He is a very eminent person—for Heaven's sake, remember that, if you happen to learn it now for the first time—and really a good creature under his cloak of conceit. How I envy you, about to exchange Arcadia for Burlington Arcadia for the first time! Give old Hermann a friendly dig in the ribs, and put dear Phemy in remembrance of me by a kiss. Be sure you bring with you a Camford cheese, some brawn, and sundry sausages—these are the productions of *Alma Mater* by which she will really live—and leave behind all your Greek and Latin. Potts keeps Horace on draught here, as it were; I tell him it is not pleasant kept *in wood;* but nothing stops him. Your future guide, philosopher, and friend,

"J. JOHNSON."

Frederick had been already prepared for this invitation by a letter from his father, breathing the most affectionate anxiety, but without a word of complaint, or reference to his own disappointment. A tinge of sadness ran indeed through every sentence, like the water-mark in a bank-note, to eyes that scanned it carefully; but his son did not observe it. "How kind of my dear father," thought he, "to let me take my own way in life, and to begin it so soon." And he wrote a grateful answer. But he did not know how that reply was received; how the fluttering hope in the doctor's bosom, that his boy might even yet refuse to leave him, was thereby miserably quenched, and succeeded by the heart-ache; and how the loving eyes henceforth grew dull, having naught to make them glad, and the gray head drooped from that day. He came to know it, as so many of us learn such things, too late—too late, when Death, the Antichrist, has touched the ear we should have soothed, with his cold hand, and said, "Be deaf."

The young man was greatly elated by the prospect before him, and in the humor to be pleased with everybody. Meeting Meyrick in the street that day, whom he had not spoken with since that unfortunate supper-party at the latter's rooms, he frankly held out his hand, with a "Come, Jack, let us part friends. I am not going back to Casterton, but shall be in London all 'the Long.'"

"Why, in London?" asked Meyrick, with a mistrust quite unmistakable, but for which Frederick was at a loss to account.

"Oh, because that is where Grub Street is situated, which is where I am to live in future. How is the squire, your father? Come, let us have a chat together. Which way are you walking? It is all the same to me."

Meyrick answered doggedly: "Oh, I wasn't going to walk anywhere. I was going to Monsieur de Lernay's, to bid them good-by. I go down to-morrow. When do you go down?"

This question was asked with an interest which might have seemed complimentary but for the harsh unfriendly tone.

"I leave for town the day after to-morrow," replied Frederick; and annoyed at the way in which his advances had been received, he added rather maliciously, "and I might just as well say good-by to the De Lernays now as later, so I'll come with you."

M. de Lernay and his daughter were both at home. Frederick had not set eyes upon Eugenie since his interview with Dr. Hermann, and indeed, had purposely avoided her, lest he should give any color to the Principal's absurd suspicion. But he had thought of her a great deal. When we like a person for his or her own sake, and afterwards hear the particulars of their history, our interest is always more excited that if the information had preceded the acquaintance. How often had he wondered at what might be the cause of that melancholy which so often sat upon Miss de Lernay's brow! How he respected, nay, revered it, now! How it chastened her glorious beauty, as she sat there with her rounded arms about her harp, itself discoursing far from sorrowful music! It was a gay air, and M. de Lernay was accompanying it with snatches of some French song, and with harmonious fillips of his fingers, when the two young men entered the drawing-room.

"Pray, do not let us interrupt you," said Frederick. "It is a most charming performance."

"And only look at his fingers!" exclaimed Meyrick, with admiration more genuine than refined. He generally spoke of M. de Lernay in the third person, and regarded him, it was evident, as a sort of intellectual acrobat, ingenious, indeed, but by no means a first-rate individual, looked upon from the "gentlemanly" point of view. It would have been impossible, he rightly conjectured, for Mr. Tregarthen, or any person connected with the great families of Downshire, to demean themselves by such grimaces, airs, and motions as accompanied the talk of the voluble Frenchman. As for understanding what he said, that was beyond Mr. John Meyrick altogether. Notwithstanding this want of appreciation, M. de Lernay was habitually complaisant towards the young squire of Casterton, and upon the present occasion endeavored, with great patience, to teach him the art of filliping the fingers to music, which, as all Jack's fingers were thumbs in the matter of clumsiness, was rather a hopeless task. In contrast to this extreme civility towards his companion, Frederick could not help remarking that the Frenchman's greeting to himself was somewhat cold and formal; perhaps what he had recently heard of the Count Lamotte had unconsciously imparted a less cordial tone to his own voice, which had been thus promptly repaid. He soon, however, forgot the circumstance in earnest conversation with Eugenie, whose welcome had been kind as ever. "And so," said she after a little talk, "you are going to London to become an author, we hear."

"Ay, but to forget his vulgar Dulcinea also," broke in her father, laughing: "that is in the bond as well, Mr. Galton, is it not?"

If the ground had opened, and swallowed Eugenie, harp, and all before his eyes, Frederick could scarcely have been more astonished. It was at her he stared for an explanation of this unexpected rudeness, this inexplicable outrage upon the part of the polite Frenchman; but her countenance expressed as great surprise as his own—mingled, however, with sorrow, pain, and one transient flush of scornful indignation.

"Really, sir," returned Frederick, after a pause, "I am quite at a loss to answer you. I do not know how much or how little of my private affairs have been confided to you; most improperly confided in any case, but in yours, as it seems, revealed to one who has neither discretion nor good feeling."

"My dear young sir," replied M. de Lernay, coolly, "I am desolated at my mistake. I imagined that Mr. Meyrick here being your intimate friend and near neighbor when at home, must needs be in possession of all the facts respecting your little—*tendresse.*—What shall we call it?" He looked towards the young squire.

"You may call it what you like, for me," returned that gentleman, doggedly; "for I don't know what you are talking about."

For an instant, M. de Lernay's eyes shot forth "Owl!" "Pig!" but his voice did not lose its sweetness, nor his lips their smile, as he continued: "I was referring to our friend's little love-affair at Casterton."

"Oh, ah, the dairymaid!" exclaimed Meyrick, laughing coarsely.

Frederick was pale with rage, his teeth ground together savagely, his fingers clutched an imaginary throat; but a voice heard by him alone was beseeching peace. "For my sake," it was whispering—"for *my* sake, Mr. Galton, do not strike him. Spare him, spare *me.*"

"I did not know her exact profession," pursued the Frenchman, quietly; "but I have not the least doubt she is a most respectable young woman. Even Dr. Hermann, who is averse to the match, has not a word to say against her upon that score. It is through him that I came to know about it, for otherwise"—here he smiled most cheerfully—"I should not have supposed our young friend to have been engaged, certainly not.—My darling Eugenie, your lips are quite pale; this room is excessively hot." He opened one of the glass doors that led into the garden; the soft June air flowed in, laden with the perfume of flowers, and the music of birds; the deep voice of a neighboring college clock was telling the three-quarters of some sunny hour; he waited for this sound to cease ere he continued: "You see, my dear Mr. Galton, that my knowledge of this little matter was arrived at in the simplest way, however indiscreet I may have been in repeating it. It was not told me as a secret —on the contrary, the good President entreated me to do my best to dissuade you from what he considers a most imprudent marriage. But then he does not know the power and consolations of love; that is to say—I beg pardon of Madame Hermann—at least of young love; and, above all, he made the great mistake of supposing me—me, of all men—to belong to the same worldly school as himself. Now, unhappily (for I envy above all things your prudent calculating folks), I am the most impulsive creature; *Vive l'amour* has always been my motto. If a young man's tastes lead him to marry early"—here he looked with steadiness at Mr. John Meyrick—"*ma foi*, let him do it: he has my full consent. I had thought to please you, Mr. Galton, by embracing your views of this affair; but I seem to have bungled the matter. I, who used to pride myself upon my tact—I protest I feel quite humiliated."

"I do not wonder at that, Monsieur de Lernay," observed Frederick, coldly. "I had come to say good-by to you and yours; it will be a longer farewell than I anticipated, that is all. You have inflicted protracted pain, in the fruitless endeavor to make yourself intelligible to a vulgar nature."

"He means *me*," observed Mr. John Meyrick, naïvely; "but he may say what he likes: hard words break no bones; let them laugh that win." And he winked, yes, positively winked at M. de Lernay, nodding his head at the same time in the direction of that nobleman's daughter.

Eugenie, white as alabaster, was still sitting by her harp, clutching its voiceless strings. A sculptor taking her for his model might have called her *frozen music*. Her eyes were looking upward, and her parted lips were moving, although in silence, like a martyr praying for strength to bear her sufferings; or even (so passing fair she looked) for the pardon of her persecutors.

She had not seen young Meyrick's gesture, that was certain, and Frederick felt so far thankful. Perhaps she had not even heard his words.

"Miss de Lernay," said he, "I am deeply grieved to have been the involuntary cause of this unpleasant and wholly unexpected scene. Your father has not succeeded, I trust, in his object of degrading me in your eyes. I do not feel that I have anything to reproach myself with, or to have earned this insult in any way." He took her hand, which was as cold and white as snow. "Good-by, Eugenie," he murmured.

"Is it the English custom," inquired M. de Lernay, carelessly, "to address young ladies who are not relatives by their Christian names?"

"Very true," observed Mr. John Meyrick, and pointing a threatening finger toward his ancient playmate, he added: "come, that lady's hand is mine; so do you drop it."

"Can this be true?" asked Frederick, with a look of unutterable pity.

But Eugenie's voice was frozen as the palm which still lay in his own.

"It *is* true," returned M. de Lernay, with dignity; "and it seemed to me but right that you should know it."

Frederick stood for a moment astounded with these evil tidings. Then Indignation getting the upper hand of Compassion, and joining with Contempt and Hate—ay, it might be with Jealousy herself—he exclaimed with bitterness: "I take my leave, Monsieur de Lernay, wishing you joy, sir, of this projected alliance; but it seems to me," he added, drawing close to the Frenchman's ear, and hissing out his words, "that you are not more felicitous in your second son-in-law than you were in your first."

CHAPTER XXIII.

CLOUDLESS.

"WHAT will it cost to print, is a reflection often occurring to literary men, public characters, and persons of benevolent intentions." And never did advertisement speak more truly. What passion in ancient times answered to the modern desire of appearing in print, I know not; but if nothing occupied its place, human nature cannot be altogether what it used to be. There are few things more touching than the first attempts of a youth to make his ideas known to his fellow-creatures through the medium of the printing press. Mothers and others are affected almost to tears by the lispings of a little child endeavoring after articulate speech, but in reality this is a far less moving spectacle. There are a host of female relatives, and often a devoted male or two, eager and willing to help the prattling infant, and anticipate its meaning; but the young author has every man's hand against him and (in general) most especially those of his own household. The literary prophet has no honor among his brethren; he is not an author to his valet-de-chambre, nor to anybody else. The public, he is assured, are in no want of lucubrations, and the editors will not give him a chance of disproving the fact. Of course the editors are in most cases perfectly right. The world of readers (in spite of what it suffers, as it is) owes them an enormous debt of gratitude; they are our natural protectors and guardians. They are the barriers which close the flood-gates of hundreds of thousands of private mental reservoirs, and confine them within their legitimate limit—manuscript. Were these removed, an intellectual catastrophe would occur similar to the inundation at Sheffield. We are much inconvenienced, even as matters are, by a number of shallow turbid streams, which had (we humbly opine) much better be sealed up; but if all the people who clamor or cringe for room for their effusions in this or that periodical, were admitted thereunto, the consequences would be frightful. The public—that is, the small portion of the human race who were left to be readers only—would then rise as one man, and destroy all printing presses.

I do not speak of the publication of books, because the publishers are a class of persons fully capable of taking care of their own interests, and will not undertake anything,—no, not though the Muses should seek Paternoster Row in person to beseech them—whereat Jupiter Mudie shakes his honored head; while, as for publishing at one's own expense, young authors are, providentially, almost always poor. Moreover, if a wishy-washy book does get published, nobody need read it: whereas, in the case of a periodical, one takes it in "for better for worse;" and having paid six months' subscription in advance, perhaps, one likes to have one's money's worth out, even if the literary fare set before us be not of the best. But though editors, as I have said, are to be praised for what they do, or rather for what they decline to do, yet it is certain that now and then they make a mistake, and the victim of their error suffers cruelly. It was of him (or her) I was thinking when I began this chapter; of the young man (or woman) of genuine talent, who believing, with justice, in himself, cannot gain a single convert to that pleasant creed. I do not insist, like certain highflying writers upon this subject, that this young soul has any sense of a particular "mission," which, somehow or other, untoward fate will not permit it to fulfil; it is sufficient to say that it yearns after something which seems, and is, unjustly denied it. The young are permitted to entertain a little vanity. One pities the fate of the beautiful princess shut up in the lonely tower with nobody to admire her loveliness; and why should we not compassionate the unknown writer, vainer than any girl of the beauty of his unaccepted thoughts? Vain as a girl, did I say? a girl is in that matter a very philosopher compared with him; a girl, too, may become an old woman without a tinge of that weakness left in her composition—I know a dozen of such honest wholesome dames myself—whereas the true writer is always vain to the very last. It is mercifully appointed that his own good opinion of his talents shall never leave him, for otherwise, sensitive to blame, to ridicule, to hatred, as he is, his life would indeed be a wretched one.

Conceive, then, such a youth, sitting up o' nights to compose immortal verses, that no human being perhaps is destined ever to read, but which he confidently imagines will be one day welcomed by half the human race; constructing the most ingenious plots, in which no living novel-devourer will ever be entangled; elaborating essays of the most admirable moral, and in the most Addisonian English; taking more English; taking more pains and trouble about these profitless matters than his father, the conveyancing barrister, or the consulting physician, ever put themselves to, ere delivering an "opinion" that brings guineas, and everything that guineas buy.

Is there not something to touch the heart about this unrequited labor, about this young toiler who is fed by hope alone? If it were possible to convince him that nothing he writes would be ever read, he would cease, perhaps, from writing (prose, at all events) altogether; but this is not possible, and therefore he works on. Force, it is said, is never lost. What, then, becomes of all these literary efforts? Well, I will tell you. They will serve, although useless in their present form, to suggest better things in future days, when the brain is seasoned, and the writer has found his public. But, in the meantime, surely this is a bad case. How many precious manuscripts has he carefully written out, and folded, and addressed, and taken privately with his own hands to the nearest post-office, or, if in town, to the fatal box with "For Contributions" on it, at the office of the journal whose columns he aspires to fill; then having dropped it in, having lost control of his own production, what a life of agony he leads! How he regrets not having added this, or excised that, or that he did not take more pains in the calligraphy, or that he ever dropped it in that box at all.

This is not a laughing matter, my smiling friend, I do assure you. *Crede experto.* You jest at scars who never felt a wound; but if your ill luck had decreed that you should "embrace the literary profession"—to use a somewhat voluptuous metaphor for a very prosaic proceeding —you would know that there are few occasions more unpleasantly anxious than that to which I have alluded. When personal poverty, and—worse—the necessity for supporting others, are involved in the matter, you can easily perceive that the ensuing suspense would be torture; but happily this is rarely the case. Few young persons, who have to earn bread for themselves or others, are so mad as to put faith in their pens. It is quite enough to be on the tenter-hooks of expectation upon one's own account, and with respect to praise, let alone pudding; for upon the acceptance or rejection of the aforesaid manuscripts seem to hang future fortune, fame, and the gratitude of one's fellow-countrymen throughout all ages. Whether that poem addressed "To a Falling Tear" (suppose) shall appear in the forthcoming issue of the *Ephemeral* (price twopence), is a question fraught, I say, with enormous apparent consequences to the youthful poet, who buys the next number upon the first moment of publication, and tears it apart with trembling fingers that will not brook the intervention of the paper-knife. How his cheeks burn, and his eyes kindle with hopeful expectation; and again, how his features pale, poor fellow, and "go out," as it were, when his disappointment becomes certain. He searches the accursed serial again and again before this takes place, clinging to the wretched chance that he may have overlooked the thing, that those lynx-like eyes of his may have passed by their desired object. Vain thought! At last, blank despair seizes upon him. What is it to him that the sun shines, or that the spring is coming upon the earth?—all with him is night and winter. Desolation has marked him for her own—for four-and-twenty hours at least, after which time he begins to reflect that it was hardly likely, not possible, in fact, that the "Falling Tear" should have been published so immediately, and looks out with as eager longing as before for the next appearance of the *Ephemeral*. But if, on the other hand, the poem happens to be printed in the number in question (which we are always supposing it deserves to be), what transcendental bliss ensues! Don't talk to me (who have been married these twenty years) of the first kiss of love; that is very pleasant, no doubt, but it is a transient gratification, and you can't carry it away with you, and show it to your friends in the country. No, there is no rapture, take it altogether, for durability and cheapness, as well as many other things, like that derived from one's first appearance in print. Nothing else brings the young blood into the cheek so merrily, and sets the heart beating to such a glorious tune. See how his eyes sparkle as he reads and re-reads that product of his own brain, which shall now permeate the civilized world, cross the ocean deeps, and elevate the savage. He is unaware that the circulation of the *Ephemeral* is small and mainly confined to the district of St. Mary Axe.

Heaven forbid that he should be disenchanted! Who would be so cruel as to dispel that glittering vision? And which of us old stagers, hacks of Grub Street, to whom the sight of print has become as hateful as that of handcuffs to the confirmed pickpocket, which of us does not wish that he could once more entertain such dreams! Happy youth, star-bespangled, flower-crowned, playing out thy brief extravaganza, far be it from me to tell thee what a crowd of vulgar people, who have all their parts to play as well as thou, and are not mere "supers," alas! are waiting at the wing to "come in" presently—critics, rivals, bailiffs, devils (printers' and blue). There is no man who has written for publication at all—no, not though he should have been born correspondent to the *Economist*—but has experienced something of poetic elevation consequent upon his first appearance in print. The country gentleman who puts forth his pamphlet upon the building of laborers' cottages, with a view to decoration as well as comfort, is not exempt from this feeling, when the first-proof comes home from his printer, any more than the budding-poet I have in my mind, although, of course, the latter experiences it in a higher degree. How many times, think you, had our young friend, Master Frederick Galton, surreptitiously sought the cottage at Casterton, where ginger-bread nuts and bull's-eyes were issued in moderate quantities, and from whence also went forth his Majesty's mails? How many parcels of manuscript, and at what an expense, considering that the book-post was not as yet invented, had he cast into that letter-box, as bread upon the waters, and found again (poor fellow), after many days, returned through the same channel! How he would leave his home before breakfast, and seek the windy Down, in order to meet the postman, and deprive him of the private bag belonging to the doctor, that nobody should know of these literary disappointments, save himself!

Even at Camford, he experienced a great thrill of joy when the *Paternoster Porcupine* came to hand, with one of his own productions among its other less interesting contents, although this was now getting to be quite a common event. At first, Mr. Jonathan Johnson had been cruelly fastidious, and Mr. Percival Potts had been absolutely hostile, as it became a sub-editor to be towards a protégé of his principal; but presently both these gentlemen, being men of discernment, perceived that there was genius as well as freshness in the lad, and that it was to the interest of their magazine that he should be encouraged. Experience of life, of course, he had not; but he had wonderful intuition in place of it; while high spirits, inestimable gift, almost always denied to a well-seasoned writer; that virtue to which Dickens owes so much of his charm, but which poor Thackeray never possessed—illumined every page. The young man was not unaware of his own value; the simple test of comparison, applied by however partial a mind, can scarcely lead one very far wrong in these matters; he studied the writing of the well-remunerated Snooks, who was in the same line of business, and said to himself, without the slightest hesitation: "I am a far better humorist than this fellow;" and Frederick Galton was right. He perceived, in that pleasant, chatty communication just received from Mr. Jonathan Johnson, an invitation not only to London, but to Literature, so far, at least, as the *Paternoster Porcupine* was concerned. It would have been couched in very different terms, he knew, if he had been looked upon as an impracticable contributor, whose importunity was about to become personal instead of merely postal; for as long as a man can be kept off by a letter, there is comfort, but when he arrives within arm's-length, he becomes intolerable.

Mr. Jonathan Johnson occupied ground-floor apartments in that part of Piccadilly which looks upon the Green Park: these consisted of a gigantic dining-room, the northern portion of which was always plunged in gloom; a bed-room of similar proportions; and a study at the back of the house, out of which you might step, if you were so minded, into a small conservatory, overshadowed by two American aloes in green tubs, and ornamented by a female form. "We don't know who she is," stammered Mr. Jonathan Johnson, upon exhibiting these premises to our young friend, on the first evening of his arrival; "but I call her the An—an—an—an—"

"The Anonyma," suggested Galton, fresh from his classical studies.

"Nothing of the kind, sir," returned the editor, with contemptuous indignation; "I call her the Anomaly, because when she works she only plays. But she scarcely ever does play, except in winter for a few minutes, when the pipes burst after a frost. Percival Potts keeps his tobacco in her pitcher because he says it's such a dry place; but I've got you a lodging close by, and if ever she plays, I'll send for you. What a fortunate young dog are you, to commence a literary life in Mayfair! What a future may not be before you, who have money to start with, and kind friends at home!"

"And in London, too, I am sure, sir," observed Frederick, frankly.

"That is well thought of, and happily said," mused the editor, regarding the blushing youth as though he were an inanimate study. "Speaks without a stammer, too; some people have such luck; and quite as good-looking as I was myself at the same age. Lord! how Potts will hate him!"

"I am afraid that he is not very fond of me already if I may judge by his letters," returned Frederick, laughing.

"Well, you see, Percival Potts is an admirable person in many respects; but he does not like men younger than himself, and being of tolerably ripe years, that enlarges his antipathies; neither is he fond of persons that are in better circumstances, and being a poor man, why, that gives him all the more scope for prejudice. Then you must be prepared for making rather an unfavorable personal impression upon him, because he is ugly —he is sometimes called the Billiard Ball, being both 'Plain' and 'Spot' in one—and that circumstance of course sets him against nice-looking people. Whenever Potts quarrels with me, poor fellow, I always set it down to jealousy. But in spite of these little disadvantages, he's a most valuable man. I know of no one who can put more animosity into a review. If he had never learned Horace (out of a 'crib,' as I fancy), he would be more agreeable as a conversationalist; but I have delivered you from that for the present, by betting him a guinea that he does not abstain from quoting his favorite author for a fortnight, and Potts will always do his very best for a guinea—that's a beautiful trait in him. He will probably confine himself to-morrow to his classical anecdotes. If you take my advice, you will listen to them attentively. It is our working-day at the office, so I will take you into the City after breakfast, and introduce you to my *collaborateur*. I have some writing to do before I go to bed, so, unless you will take supper, I will show you your lodgings."

Mr. Jonathan Johnson had already entertained his young friend with a nice little dinner, washed down with excellent champagne, since which they had had coffee with a *petit verre* in it, so that Mr. Frederick Galton was by no means in want of any further refreshment. His host therefore led the way to the apartments he had already engaged for him, which, for the benefit of the curious, I may as well state comprised a second floor in Bolton Row.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A NIGHT-WALK IN LONDON.

WHAT a poem in itself, I have said, is that fiirst appearance in print, which seems to some, perhaps, such a prosaic matter; and what a poem, also, is another ordinary circumstance which happens to even a greater number of people—namely, one's first night in

London. In the daytime, the stranger is so dazed with the ceaseless crowd and monstrous hum, that he has had no time to reflect upon the wonders about him; but in the summer night (suppose), as he leans forth from his window, and hears the distant traffic that will not cease for hours yet, and looks round on the countless dwellings of his fellow-creatures, ignorant of his hopes, and fears, and ambitions, and even of his very existence, how "the individual withers, and the world grows more and more."

If the hypothetical stranger, however, has inaugurated his arrival by going to the Cider Cellars, and making a night of it, he will doubtless not experience any emotion of this kind; or if there is the least uncertainty about procuring breakfast next morning, that circumstance will undoubtedly monopolise his mind, to the exclusion of all less practical considerations. I have no desire to claim more empire for the imagination than it is entitled to. I don't believe that Bow Bells said anything whatever to Whittington about his future appointment as Lord Mayor. They discoursed to him, more probably, concerning the food and accommodation he was likely to meet with upon the ensuing day. There is nothing more engrossing to a man with an empty stomach than the idea of getting it filled; compared with that sacred necessity, theology, politics, metaphysics are of insignificant importance, even to a gentleman of genius. There is an immense deal talked and written about the superiority of mind over matter, by respectable persons who have never experienced hunger and thirst; but I have never seen philosophy and an empty stomach in company together yet. Let the dull dogs take heart. But as for this Frederick Galton, with whom everything is running smoothly at present, it is but natural (I do assure them) that he should lean out of his second-floor window, and indulge himself in a little philosophical meditation. This London, which, to a poor and friendless man, is, I suppose, the most hateful place on earth, and more solitary than sailless sea to shipwrecked mariner, is, to one who has just crossed its threshold, with a well-filled purse and ready-made friends, the most promising city out of Fairyland. It is so when mere Pleasure is beckoning with her fair round arms, but how much more when Fame stands beside her, smiling too, but far more nobly, and eager to present her wreath of bay-leaves. The golden gate stood open upon the shining road; the glory beamed upon him, not from far. A mighty music jubilant and full, which had his praise for theme, seemed to salute the trembling ear of Frederick Galton as he hearkened for the first time to that solemn roar of London.

Then his thoughts slid back to the incidents which had so lately occurred to him. The confidence which Dr. Hermann had reposed in him, and which, under the influence of passion, he had betrayed to M. de Lernay. He pictured to himself the previous meeting which must have taken place between those two, and how the Principal, acting for the best, had made a confidant of the Frenchman with respect to his young friend's attachment to a person of humble birth, and to the supposed influence which the beautiful Eugenie exercised over him. He perceived how De Lernay's pride had been touched by this injudicious news; for, perhaps, he had really misconstrued Frederick's intentions to his daughter, and at one time had been disposed to welcome them.

There was some allowance to be made for the old nobleman, then, so far as Frederick was concerned. It was a characteristic piece of revenge that he should thus have humbled him in the presence of John Meyrick, an eligible suitor enough, so far as money and position were concerned; but that the father of Eugenie should have given such gratuitous pain to his own daughter seemed almost incomprehensible. Was it possible that he suspected her of entertaining a secret affection for the village doctor's son, and had taken this cruel method at once of intimating his suspicions, and putting a violent end to them? Could he himself meet the De Lernays again, thought Frederick, after having exploded that bomb-shell about the second son-in-law? Was it possible that he should never more behold the kind eyes of Eugenie, or listen to her witching tones; or worse, was he to know her as the bride, the wife of his old playmate, to whom time would only bring new vices, and harden the ingrained coarseness of his disposition? It was nothing to Frederick, so far as he was concerned, whom Eugenie married, certainly not; but it pained him to think of what her life was likely to be, mated with such a clown; and his cheeks flushed, and his nails pressed hard into his hands, as he thought of John Meyrick. Of all the men from whom he had just parted at Camford, his Casterton companion was certainly the least attractive. There were ten, twenty, thirty honest-hearted, kindly young English gentlemen, with any one of whom—Selby, Richards, Ackers, Swayne, their very names even occurred to him—he could have borne to hear that Eugenie de Lernay was betrothed—but to that unfeeling dullard! What a scoundrel was this sweet-spoken, smiling Frenchman, who could sell his daughter to such a bidder! They were coming up to town, it seemed, shortly. Would it be better that he should meet her again, or not? there could be no "harm" in his doing so, of course; but would it be agreeable to herself? Somebody else, who was of infinitely more importance to him, was also coming up to town. Beautiful Mary Perling would be at a certain number in Grosvenor Square in a very few days.

It was not worth while making his good father anxious by informing him of this latter circumstance. As for Mr. Morrit, all confidence between uncle and nephew had been put an end to by the conduct of the former. Mr. Jonathan Johnson was not the sort of man to be plagued with information of this kind—and, in short, what need was there to tell anybody? Grosvenor

Square! He looked out that fashionable spot in the map of London he had purchased that afternoon; it did not seem far from Bolton Row, his present residence, and he thought he would like to see the very house where his dear Mary was to be located. There was a latchkey lying temptingly upon his table, and the night was early yet; it had not struck ten o'clock. He pocketed the key, and putting his hat on, went down-stairs; in the hall he found his landlady, with whom he had already had an interview.

"Going to take a walk, sir, this beautiful night?" said she, with fussy politeness. "You will find your candle and the matches upon the table when you come in."

"Thank you," replied Frederick. Charming old lady, delightful arrangement, thought he; nobody is inquisitive in town. What a fuss there is at Camford about "knocking in" after midnight! What an astonishment would there be at Casterton if one started out at 9.45 P.M. for a stroll!

Among the accomplishments which Alma Mater had taught him was that of smoking cigars, and he lit one ere he left the door-step.

"A nice-spoken young gentleman," reflected the landlady, looking after him; "but I am afraid he is no better than he should be. Mr. Johnson said I wasn't to be a spy upon him—far from it; but that I was to let him know if he got into much mischief, being fresh from the country. How on earth am I to tell? He doesn't seem to be domestic, using his latchkey the very first evening. I hope he won't set the house a-fire when he comes back; perhaps I had better sit up, for fear he should have taken more than is good for him. One never knows; though he's gone the wrong way for that. All the drinking-places are in the other direction. Maybe he's got friends in Mayfair, though it's rather an odd time to call upon them."

The old lady wagged her head three times in a sagacious manner, and closed the door with an "Ah!" expressing a whole volume of reprehension.

Unaware of that injurious interjection, Mr. Frederick Galton took his way up Curzon Street, just beginning to be alive with its more or less fashionable assemblies, and noisy with wheel and hoof, and so, by a circuitous process, reached the square he sought. There was nothing about the mansion in question peculiarly fitting the future abode of a beloved object! a couple of paroquets, in the shape of two young footmen, lounging and laughing at the open door, seemed to give token that their master and mistress had relieved them of their laborious duties that evening by going out to dinner; and grandeur and vulgarity appeared to hold divided possession of the place. How could he ever visit her there, being, as she must needs be, in the housekeeper's room! Would not these powdered apes treat him with impertinence when he asked to see her? He had read of such things in the case of governesses, and a housekeeper's assistant would be in an even less elevated position. Nay, would it not, indeed, be necessary for him to ring the servant's bell? Heavens! It is astonishing how these little matters affect very superior minds, my friends. Mr. Frederick Galton, poet, author, gentleman, and who privately considered himself in the order of nobility which is called "nature's own," considerably above any ordinary member of the House of Peers, felt quite a cold shiver as he thought of these things; the great iron extinguishers upon either side of the portal seemed for the moment as though they were placed there to quench the torch of love itself. The effects of a *supposed* slight upon a sensitive nature being such as I describe, what may not a real one effect! It is said that a prime minister of this country owed the enmity of his most powerful parliamentary foe to having put upon him some little disparagement. Foolish M.P., but far more foolish prime minister! When will people of all grades learn that cleanliness is not next to godliness, but that civility—a tenderness for the feelings of others, and especially for those of apparent inferiors—occupies the intermediate place.

To the possession of that virtue, such as it is, Frederick Galton—who, I am afraid, has fallen into sad and deserved disfavor with many folks already, and will fall into more—might lay legitimate claim. He had once lain awake half the night at Camford, tortured with the notion that he had spoken roughly to his bedmaker upon the previous day, on the occasion of her having let his fire out; and very much he astonished that lady the next morning by his sincere apologies. Perhaps the secret of Frederick's universal popularity lay more in this careful courtesy—a sort of divine politeness, unintelligible to vulgar natures—than in any other of his natural gifts; it clung to him at all times—even in very bad ones—as the odor to the rose; if he ever did himself such violence as to refuse alms to a street-beggar, it would have been in terms that would be only less acceptable than a copper. But I believe he never had the heart for such an act of Spartan virtue. At all events, when he left Grosvenor Square that evening, and, sauntering into Hyde Park, was besought by a little beggar-girl for money, he gave her a shilling, adding to the gift some expression of pity for her condition.

Ah, it was pitiful,
Near a whole cityful,
Home she had none.

The Park, she said, was in summer-time her nightly refuge; the dewy grass, or some hard bench, perhaps, the couch upon which she stretched her childish limbs. The night was fair, it was true, as yet, but clouds were darkening its face and threatening rain. How frightful did it seem that this young creature should be shelterless! The cheerful home-lights were glimmering from a thousand casements within view, but there was not one that beckoned for her—a child whom it was the duty of every one to protect and cherish. Was it not, therefore, Frederick Galton's duty too? Had Christianity—the words he had read, the sermons he had heard—no practical application? Should he not one day be told: Inasmuch as he had not succored this little one? Considerations of this kind do not, of course, seriously affect the mature philosopher, the political economist, or the divine; but in the season of youth, there are occasions when they strike us very forcibly.

The glorious company of the angels, thought Frederick, might at that moment be anxiously watching what course this mortal would take who had been offered such an opportunity of obeying his Master's word to the very letter. "Suppose," soliloquized he, "I take this child, and give her to my landlady, she will never take her in—that's certain. The poor little creature is dirty and ragged, and thereby has the more claim, indeed, to all Christian offices; but lodging-house keepers are a prejudiced race. To ring up a respectable lady at 11.15 P.M., upon the very first night of our arrival at her residence, with the modest request that she will, for our sake, accommodate—adopt, in point of fact—a human waif and stray like this; really," muttered Frederick, apologetically, "I don't see what is to be done. Look here, my poor child," added he, aloud; "if you will call to-morrow at this address, I will try to do something for you."

The large blue eyes looked at him gratefully, but wonderingly. She knew that he meant her well, because he had given her a shilling; but the notion of anybody trying to do something for her was an inscrutable mystery. Her whole life long, comprising half a dozen years or so, passed in that (to some, so agreeable) metropolis, offered no precedent of the kind.

"My God!" cried Frederick, taking out a whole pocketful of silver, "but this is terrible. Have you no mother, father, friend?"

The child shook her little head, a mere tangle of hay-colored hair, which would have been a "profusion of bright brown locks" under better circumstances, and was evidently about to say: "No, sir," when a thin squeaky treble interposed with: "Oh you wicked story, Mary Jane, to tell the gentleman you have no friends when father is on the bench under the trees there in a hague-fit, and your poor mother down with the fever."

These words proceeded from a boy about two years older than the first child, and if possible, more ragged. One brace passed diagonally across him, and secured in front by a pin instead of a button, did duty for both jacket and waistcoat. A filthily dirty shirt, and a pair of torn and ragged trousers, comprised his entire costume; he had not even shoes and stockings, a circumstance which accounted for his having come upon Frederick and his companion unawares.

He spoke with that whine which mendicants use so much to their own confusion, under the impression that it arouses pity, and not suspicion; but the glance with which he contemplated the money that still lay in Frederick's open palm, was frightfully natural. He gazed at it hungrily, wolfishly, and with a sort of fiendish envy, as some shipwrecked starving man might gaze at a loaf in the hands of his mortal foe.

"Is he going to give you all that?" he inquired of the girl. Then shifting his quick earnest tone to the beggar-note, he added: "Heaven bless you, good gentleman."

"No," replied Frederick, returning the money to his pocket, "I am not going to give her anything at present. He says you have been telling me lies, little girl."

The child stood with downcast eyes, but without tears or change of color. Hard words were given her every hour; she was even thankful when they fell to her lot instead of blows. The boy seized her roughly by the shoulder.

"Yes, you are a little liar, Mary Jane; as the good gentleman says. She *will* go a-begging, on her own hook, for all father can do; and she don't give him the money neither, and him so ill; lying on the bench yonder, with the hague."

"Do you mean to say he sleeps in the open air, with ague upon him?" asked Frederick, horrified.

"Ah, yes, sir, nights and nights he does—there he lies, sir, in that little clump of trees, if you'll come and see for yourself. It's more sheltered for him amongst the trees."

Frederick followed, really grieved at the falsehood of the little child, and prepared to give something to the sick man. But the angels did not any longer seem to him to be interested in the spectacle. Impulsive generosity is a very delicate virtue, and easily blunted. The whole affair, in which a few moments before his eternal welfare seemed to be concerned, now began to be a nuisance.

The girl laid her small hand upon his coat-cuff, as though she would entreat his forgiveness, and although he did not shake her off, he disengaged himself from her coldly. As he did so, he noticed her eyes, which were absolutely distended with terror.

"Stop, boy," said he, "mind that you do not say your sister told me stories; I don't want her to be punished."

"Very well, sir, Mary Jane shan't be beat. We're close to father now, sir, if you'll step out."

Frederick quickened his steps, but looking down at the girl, perceived, although it was far from light by this time, that she was making signs to him not to follow the boy. Her little mouth was rounded to a "no," although she kept silence. In an instant it struck him that her terror was upon his account, rather than her own. He stopped short. At the same instant, two men came swiftly from the trees in front, and made straight at him. "Run, run!" cried the little girl.

Frederick Galton turned, but behind him already stood a figure which had noiselessly placed itself between him and the path of retreat. Westward the way was yet open, but one of his opponents was already running to cut him off from that direction. It was evidently intended to drive him into the clump, wherein, although it was by no means thick, there might be ropes placed to trip him up, or more robbers in hiding behind the tree-trunks.

To the west, therefore, Frederick turned, and sped away at topmost speed. Fortunately, he had no great-coat on, and he flattered himself with reason that could he once show his heels to the three scoundrels, they would not easily catch him. Not for nothing had he followed the bounding hoops untouched by hand over the windy downs. Still, even a town-bred man may be swift for a mere rush, and the one who had undertaken the task of cutting him off had probably been chosen for that post on account of his speed.

The roof of the guard-house could be seen in the distance just rising out of the hollow, and for that Frederick shaped his course. He heard a rushing of winged feet behind him and about him; he believed that at one particular point, when he was striving his hardest, a hand was stretched forth to seize him, and did just graze the skirt of his garment; but he was aware of nothing for certain until he came at racing speed and head foremost, against some soft substance advancing in the opposite direction, from which he rebounded, and then spun round in spite of himself like a billiard-ball which has got the screw on. This obstacle was a strange gentleman's waistcoat.

Not in the least doubting that he had fallen in with another robber—to which profession he was prepared by this time to set down most Londoners who took the air at night—Frederick began, with what little breath was still left in him, to vociferate "Police! police!" notwithstanding that the stranger wore as respectable an appearance as a silk umbrella and double eye-glasses can give a man. These latter, when fixed over the nose by a spring, generally impart to the wearer some likeness to a waterbeetle; but in the present case the similarity was perfect. No other insect could have expressed such vacuous astonishment. It was nearly a minute before self-complacency was restored to the stout stranger, and pomposity reassumed her throne.

"Police, indeed!" ejaculated he. "Upon my word, young man, I envy your audacity. You commit a murderous assault upon an unoffending citizen, and then call upon the law to sanction your crime."

"Sir," replied Frederick, "I am deeply grieved; but the fact is, I was pursued by robbers—footpads."

"Pursued by camel-leopards," retorted the stranger, contemptuously; "there is no such thing as a footpad in existence; the Enclosure Act has done away with them and their haunts together. It was your conscience that pricked you to that speed, young man. The wicked fleeth when no man pursueth."

"There were three men," persisted Frederick. "I saw them all as plain as I see you."

"An optical illusion," returned the stranger, confidently.

"If a little girl had not cried 'Run!' I should have been robbed, and perhaps murdered, by this time."

"There is nothing more easily deceived than the hearing," persisted the stout gentleman, "and especially if we are suffering from self-reproach. Bessus, the Pæonian, who had secretly committed parricide, was harassed in precisely the same manner. Being at dinner on one occasion, he arose up hastily, and with his spear began to break a nest of swallows that was made upon the outside of his house, and to kill the young. 'Why are you so angry that the swallows twitter?' asked the guests. 'Twitter?' said he. 'Oh, you call it twittering, when you hear them thus falsely accusing me of having slain my father.'"

"But I really have not committed parricide," urged Frederick, smiling at the strange humor of his new acquaintance.

"That is nothing to boast of," returned the other, austerely; "and besides, I dare say you have done worse things. Fathers are sometimes very annoying.—And now, will you please tell me the whole story, with the *dénouement* of which I am only too well acquainted."

Then Frederick explained, that being a young gentleman from the country, he had come out for his first walk in town that evening, and had met with the adventure which had been already described. "The little girl," insisted he, "had, I am sure, nothing whatever to do with it. She never intended, I am certain, to entrap me in the snare which the boy led me into. I never saw a more genuine object of charity."

"Charity—and very often the object of it—covers a multitude of sins," observed the philosopher, demurely.

"Not in this case, however," returned Frederick, warmly: "I owe my safety to that little child, I know. I am so afraid they will take some cruel vengeance on her for having striven to warn me of my danger."

"They will give her a smack or two, doubtless," observed the stranger; "but that is all. The desire of revenge for its own sake is dying away, along with the other heroic virtues. There was something glorious in those old revenges. That *calix vitæ, calix mortis* of the Earl of Luxemburg, when he was poisoned by the monk in the eucharist, haunts one's memory like the refrain of some ballad."

"I wish I could meet with a policeman," exclaimed Frederick, impatiently.

"Then, again, there was that other Italian," pursued the stranger with enthusiasm, "who, having his enemy in his power, told him that there was no possible way to save his life, unless he would immediately deny and renounce his faith; which the poor wretch having done, in hope of mercy, his enemy stabbed him to the heart, killing, as he believed, his body and soul in the same moment. Again, Olearius tells us—"

"My dear sir," interrupted Frederick, vehemently, "would you mind coming back with me, since I cannot see either park-keeper or policeman?"

"I should mind it very much, young gentleman. Have you not had enough of adventure for one night? Be content with your whole skin. Either your three friends and the two interesting children are still in the clump of trees you speak of, or they are not—and, as I believe, never were. In the one case, it would be madness to retrace your steps, in the other, folly. If you have given the little girl your address and she is the innocent being you imagine her to be, she will doubtless call at your lodgings to-morrow; otherwise, she will avoid them as she would a police-office. My way lies southward, and I recommend you to accompany me till we get out of the park: it is only just, since you have delayed me beyond gate-shutting, that you should help me over the railings. Popilius would have almost done as much for Cicero."

"Sir," said Frederick, "I am in your hands. You doubtless know what ought to be done better than I. But how disgraceful is it that Hyde Park should not be safe to walk in! I shall certainly write to the *Times*."

"You had better write to the *Unicorn*, which is always upon the side of order," returned the stranger, loftily, "of which it is only right to say, that I am assistant editor. It is the duties of that responsible office which have kept me out so late, otherwise, I love early hours—'small and early,' as the phrase goes—as Licinius Crassus loved his lamprey. Yonder are the railings between us and the Knightsbridge Road; we must take a bee-line for that big elm-tree, and we shall find that three of the sharp iron heads have been removed thereabouts—I believe by the licentious soldiery—for convenience of ingress and egress."

"You have been belated, then, once or twice before," observed Frederick, slyly.

"Just so," said the stranger; "mostly through giving benevolent assistance to persons in peril. Besides, do you contend that there is anything seriously wrong in climbing over a fence, you, a young reprobate, with a latchkey? You remind me of Pope Adrian IV. who, having swallowed as many camels as most theologians, was choked by a fly in a glass of water. Come, give me a leg up."

"With all my heart," replied Frederick, assisting his stout companion in the manner requested; "but there is somebody abusing us already for getting out this way."

"Give him railing for railing," ejaculated the stranger; "he is some miserable official appointed by a Whig ministry. Thank you, my lad; my lodgings are close by. If a glass of toddy has charms for you, I shall be happy to offer it."

"I am very much obliged to you," replied Frederick, frankly; "but I am somewhat too tired to appreciate your good company this evening. I should much like to know, however, to whom I am indebted for the kind invitation."

"My name, sir, will probably not be unknown to you," observed the stout gentleman, waving his hand with dignity. "As a political writer, who has been mentioned for more than one borough during the present sitting of parliament—as a *littérateur* of some little eminence—as a social companion of unexceptionable lineage, whom most persons are glad to welcome to the friendly board—in one of these three characters, I say, it is probable that you must already be acquainted with the name of Percival Potts."

CHAPTER XXV.

EDITORIAL.

THE office of the *Paternoster Porcupine* was, of course, in Paternoster Row, a locality fortunately better known than frequented by the inhabitants of the metropolis. If the nine Muses, as we have hypothetically imagined, should really ever visit that locality in person, they would entirely block it up as a thoroughfare, even though they should leave their crinolines in Ivy Lane. The haunters of this home of literature are characteristically spare and thin, and an author may pass an author upon its foot-pavement; but "Gin a body (of decent size) meet a body" (of decent size)—if a publisher meet a publisher, for instance—one of them must either lie down, and let the other walk over him, as the goats are said to do in similar circumstances, or step into the roadway and run the risk of being flattened out by a van full of tracts or encyclopædias. Gin a van meet a van, I do not know what eventually happens, although I have often seen the beginning of the embarrassment.

From this dark and confined spot, however, issue light and freedom enough, as sparkling wine flows forth from the neck of a black bottle. The *Porcupine* had its office pleasantly situated in the very narrowest part of this so-called thoroughfare, and when it shot forth its periodical quills on the last day of every month, may have been said to be unapproachable by the general public. If you went in the wholesale way for "Pines," to which the trade irreverently abbreviated the title of that serial, you might have been listened to; but the author of the "Falling Tear" in search of a single number of the publication, would have been trampled under foot by newsboys. Upon the morning of Frederick's first visit, however, all was peace with the *Porcupine*. A little boy stabbing at flies on the counter with a penknife, was the sole occupant of the shop; and he did not desist from that exciting pastime even at the entrance of Mr. Jonathan Johnson with his young friend.

Passing by this shocking illustration of the truth, that familiarity breeds contempt, without remark, the august editor led the way up a tortuous staircase into the *sanctum sanctorum*, where sat the *collaborateur* of the *Porcupine*, the assistant editor of the *Unicorn*, the gentleman who had been spoken of for so many boroughs—the writer, the politician, the conversationalist so justly esteemed, or, in one word—Potts. Frederick had, of course, acquainted Mr. Johnson with the fact of his having met with this gentleman the preceding night, and there was now no need of an introduction. Still, Mr. Potts rose up at their entrance, and made a little speech, in which he compared the present occasion with the introduction of Pope to the great Dryden, and was pleased to pass a few compliments upon the young gentleman from Camford, sandwiched with exactly double the number upon himself.

"We have several articles in your handwriting, Mr. Galton, in yonder cupboard, which is the blessed home of the 'Accepted.' In the last paper, I think, I recognize a touch or two of my own; never mind, my friend; I am not angry: they will bear transplanting, I flatter myself: only do not imagine that you deceive me. You have not read my pamphlet, '*A Lance broken with the Times*,' for nothing."

"Really, sir," said Frederick, coloring, "I was not aware—"

"I have not the least doubt of it," interrupted Percival Potts, surveying his supposed plagiarist with the blandest air: "no person of your age is at all aware of what is really his own, and what is the property of other people."

"The law takes a very different view of the case," remarked Frederick, coolly.

"I am speaking of ideas, sir," returned the novelist, savagely. "Here are fifty manuscripts upon this table, every one of which is going to be 'Declined with thanks;' many of them contain very admirable sentiments, which, the writers would blush to hear, are all stolen from the great classical writers of old. Pindar, sir—the poet Pindar supplies the raw material for three-fourths of your nineteenth-century scribblers."

"Does he, indeed, sir?" observed Frederick, cheerfully. "Then I am glad I never read him."

"You have read others, however, who *have* read him," remarked Mr. Potts, severely; "and an idea is not rendered original by being stolen twice over."

"I think you are rather hard upon our young coadjutor," observed Mr. Jonathan Johnson, perceiving that Frederick's *amour propre* was wounded, and that he was about to say something rude. "Have you sent back Tompkins's paper?"

"There is his horrid scrawl, sir," returned the collaborateur, "which I confess I did not give myself the trouble to wade deeply into."

"Why, you have scarcely opened it," remonstrated the editor-in-chief, taking up a roll.

"O yes, I have," replied Mr. Potts. "The beggar had fastened the pages together with some sticky substance, on purpose, I suppose, to see if I did pay his article any attention; and I went through the whole thing most conscientiously—with a paper knife."

"Do you mean to say you never read it?" ejaculated Frederick Galton, aghast.

"I read quite enough of it, my young friend; a little of Tompkins goes a great way. I seldom read your own admirable productions to the very end, while in manuscript; first, because your handwriting is infamous, and resembles the dying autograph of a spider escaped from the ink-pot; and, secondly, because I wish to reserve for myself what I know will be a treat in print. Ahem."

"And how much does Mr. Johnson read?" asked Frederick.

"Well, you see," replied the head of the literary staff, "Potts here does all the wow—wow—wow—"

"All the work," explained Mr. Potts; "and Johnson here gets all the salary."

"All the wow—wow—winnowing," continued Mr. Jonathan Johnson, without taking the least notice of the interruption. "Potts is good at rough wholesale work of that kind. He has a blessed gift of forgetting to-morrow all the rubbish that he reads to-day: I wish it had been so from his youth up, and particularly during that period when he devoted himself to the study of Horace. Now, I can't forget what I read so easily. Potts is the intellectual buffer, as it were, who intervenes between myself and the great mass of would-be contributors. My brain could not stand the shocks to which he is exposed so continuously. My mental organization is more delicate, and fer—fer—"

"Feebler," suggested Mr. Percival Potts.

"And fer—fer—finer," continued the editor-in-chief. "It was I, my dear Galton, who laid my finger upon your first production, and observed: 'Mark my words, Potts; this young person is a man of genius."'

"Now, see how a plain tale shall put this man down," observed Potts, with gravity. "When my principal here returned from the country after Christmas: 'There will be something foolish come to the office one day,' said he, 'with the Casterton post-mark. You must make room for it, my dear fellow, in the *Porcupine*, and put it in as presentable a shape as you can.' I remonstrated, of course, at such favoritism; but Mr. Johnson only remarked: 'I know it's wrong; the writer has but few ideas of his own, being but a lad, and it will doubtless be an illegitimate production; but then it will be only a very little one. I told him to make it short.'"

"He did," corroborated Frederick, laughing.

"'But his uncle is a very old college friend of mine;

he quotes from the classics beautifully, and reminds me of you, my dear Potts. And he gave me two bottles of twenty port.'—'Mr. Johnson,' said I, 'you are the editor-in-chief, and I must do your bidding; but let me tell you a short story. Carolastad had been made a Doctor of Divinity eight years before he ever read the Bible; and afterwards conferring the same degree on another person equally unfitted for the position, he made this speech: 'Here I stand, and do promote this man; and I know I do not rightly therein, but, on the contrary, commit a mortal sin. But I do it for the gain of two guilders which I get by him.' I pointed out that Mr. Jonathan Johnson was Carolastad the second. And under that protest you became an accepted contributor."

"And all these rejected papers?" sighed Frederick, pointing to the piled-up heap upon the table. "What disappointment, and pain, and humiliation, are they about to inflict! I wonder you sleep o' nights, Mr. Potts."

"He does not," remarked Mr. Jonathan Johnson; "for he never goes to bed until the small hours. But as for feelings, he has none. See! he has written 'With thanks' outside that scented manuscript of the young lady of title; and on the literary production of the poor governess yonder, composed on blue-lined and coarse paper, torn, perhaps, out of her washing-book, with the same unswerving fingers."

"The clerk copies all that out down-stairs," observed Mr. Potts, apologetically; "otherwise, I should have thrown a great deal of sentiment into the formation of the letters. I confess, however, nothing moves me so much as when a rejected contributor has omitted to enclose postage-stamps for the transmission of his article. Why the deuce can't he read the notice printed in every number of the *Porcupine?* Our proprietors don't want his stamps, of course, but where am *I* to get the Queen's heads from to frank my private correspondence, unless the regulation is observed? This stamp-sending is curious and characteristic. English contributors usually enclose them without remark, and as a matter of course—I am speaking of volunteer communications from persons who are unknown to us—Scotch contributors enclose them, and draw our attention very particularly to the fact that they have gone to that expense; Irish contributors never think of enclosing them."

"But you send back their papers, too, I trust, all the same," observed Frederick.

"We would do so most certainly, and especially because natives of Hibernia are generally very solicitous to have them back again; but not one in ten remembers to favor us with his address. Half-a-dozen letters will follow one another, demanding to know the fate of the original document, but all of them composed in such a passion that the writers still omit to supply those few lines without which we are totally unable to comply with their requests."

"You must almost regret that there is such a thing as a volunteer contributor, since he causes you so much trouble," remarked Frederick.

"Well, no," returned the sub-editor, musing. "There are situations, of course, such as when a poetess of five-and-forty insists upon having a personal interview, and reading her horrid verses; or when a personal friend, whose talents do not lie in the literary direction, requests to appear in print, which makes one wish that the *Porcupine* were fed by machinery, or, which is almost the same thing, by a regular literary staff. But magazines which have a standing army of that kind, and do not admit volunteers, invariably get *cliquey* and narrow. Even if only one out of fifty applicants is found strong enough for the place, it is in my opinion quite worth the trouble of winnowing all this chaff."

"Besides which," observed Frederick, "it cannot but be a grateful task to hold out the hand to struggling talent, to quicken a weary heart with a few strokes of the pen, and to make light with a kindly hint or two the doubtful way."

"Exactly," remarked the editor, dryly; "only you must be deuced careful about your hints. And when a gentleman, and still worse, a lady, particularly begs that 'the faults of the accompanying manuscript may be pointed out' for future guidance—then let the too obliging editor beware. The authoress of 'The Bridal Gift,' in seventeen stanzas, is not to be told that 'accept' is not a perfect rhyme to 'reject,' with impunity. I have had such rejoinders out of pink-tinted envelopes, and in altogether angelic handwriting, as might have had Billingsgate for their post-mark instead of Belgravia. *Desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne.*"

"You owe me a gug—gug—guinea, Potts," exclaimed Mr. Jonathan Johnson, eagerly. "I never admired Horace from your tongue so much before. And I must say, it serves you right for abusing our lady volunteers. Remember, for instance, that dear Miss Hermann, now departed; were ever patience, and genius, and good sense found united together more charmingly in any human being?"

"I have nothing to say against Miss Hermann," observed the sub-editor, loftily; "but I flatter myself I have long been proof against the blandishments of females of the quill. Time was when I looked with a favoring eye upon that slanting handwriting of theirs."

"Don't believe one word of this, Galton," quoth Mr. Jonathan Johnson; "this is the merest hypocrisy, let me tell you. Potts is the idol of the fair. He is perpetually being crowned with roses by nymphs in spectacles, and with blue stockings. If they survive the effect of his personal charms and literary reputation, they succumb to his ancient lineage."

"Do not sneer, sir, at an advantage which you would know well enough how to appreciate if you possessed it yourself," returned the sub-editor, angrily. "Good blood, sir," (it is impossible to say how like Dr. Johnson Mr. Percival Potts became as he spoke these words), "is not a thing to be spoken lightly of—the blue blood of the British aristocracy."

"A pretty color," remarked the editor-in-chief with gravity. "Why don't they take sarsaparilla?"

"You are a vulgar fellow, sir," exclaimed the other, hotly; "I decline to argue with you altogether. You know that my family is as good as any in England. If you go to the Herald's office and inquire for Potts—"

"He used to write for the *Morning Herald*," observed Mr. Johnson, explanatorily; "that's what he means."

"I say, sir, you will find there is no name more associated with our historical greatness than that which I have the honor to bear." Mr. Potts had risen with his subject. He had his back to the fireplace, although there was no fire; a coat-tail was under one arm, and the other was extended as though calling the past to witness to the achievements of his ancestors. "There has never," he continued, "been any great deed effected, whether in the senate, or in the forum, or upon the battle-field, but it will be found on investigation that a Potts has been always at the bottom of it."

"And never at the top of it," ejaculated Frederick, with an incontrollable impulse.

Mr. Percival Potts cast a glare through his spectacles, such as, if they had happened to have been burning-glasses, would have withered his young contributor where he stood; then preserving a tremendous silence he dropped his coat-tail, took up his hat, and walked straight out of the room.

"I kuk—kuk—kuk—congratulate you, my young friend," observed Mr. Jonathan Johnson, ruefully. "You have made an indifferent joke and a determined enemy for life. Why, even I, who have known him these twenty years, *I* scarcely venture to break a lance with Percival Potts over the barrier of his ancestral greatness."

"My dear Mr. Johnson," observed Frederick, frankly, "I am sorry to have offended any friend of yours, but the fact is, I cannot stand a gentleman of that sort. Who cares about his confounded family? What a subject, too, for a human being to be tedious upon! Surely, of all bores, a hog in armor is the most unbearable."

"Master Frederick Galton, Master Frederick Galton," returned the editor, shaking his scanty locks, "it is less dangerous to have a talent for mimicry, ay, or even for drawing caricatures, than for making an epigram like that. Percival Potts is a man who is not accustomed to hear the simple truth, and far less the truth with a sting to it. He is the king of a little territory, the inhabitants of which pay him abject homage."

"Dangerous amongst eggs with a stick, as we say in Downshire," remarked Frederick, laughing.

"And not only then," continued Mr. Johnson, gravely. "He has no little social influence, although it may be he is less loved than feared; while he is really of considerable political mark; and if ever the *Unicorn's* man, Lord Cuckoo, comes into office, depend upon it we shall hear of Potts. They say Lord Peewit is getting very shaky."

"I knew nothing of all this, you see," observed Frederick, impatiently. "Why don't he wear a placard, or the Cuckoo livery? and I am afraid I should not have held my tongue even then."

And his apprehension was well grounded. For there are two sorts of independent spirits in the world, who are never known to mix kindly. The one to which Mr. Percival Potts belonged believe that all the world belongs *to them;* while the other, comprising Mr. Frederick Galton, never concern themselves with the question, and do not care three farthings whom it belongs to.

CHAPTER XXVI.

RECREANT.

HOW very few things come to pass, however capable (as it seems) of being foreseen, exactly as we poor mortals have anticipated! There are such things as presentiments, it is true, but we hear nothing of the strong convictions often entertained beforehand, which the event proves to be groundless. A man of an unhopeful disposition, who is always speculating for the fall, must occasionally meet with the misfortune he so earnestly expects, but even that not seldom comes upon him in a manner as unexpected as success itself.

Thus, upon an afternoon at the end of June, when Mr. Frederick Galton made his call at a certain house in Grosvenor Square, apprehensive, as we have seen, of meeting there with a number of social indignities, things did not turn out precisely according to his mental programme. He experienced that hesitation, which we have already mentioned as having taken possession of his mind, as to whether he should ring the "Visitors'" or the "Servants'" bell, up to the instant that he stood under the portico of the mansion, when he discovered, to his great relief, that there was but one bell and a knocker.

Of course he could have gone to the area gate, and rung *that* bell; but there was an individual with a basket under his arm, and wearing a white apron, already there, in whose company it seemed somehow that it would be incongruous for him to gain admittance. So he rang the visitors' bell, and, as a brass-plate upon the door said "Knock and Ring," he knocked, but with a hesitating and indecisive hand, as a postman might have done who had been invited to a fashionable dinner-party.

It was evident, from the time that elapsed before the door was opened, that this hesitation had not been lost upon the folks below stairs. Mr. Galton was upon the point of knocking again, and this time rather savagely (for he did not like to be kept waiting any more than did Louis Quatorze), when the door was opened, but not to its full width, by a canary-suited footman with a powdered head. Upon catching sight of the visitor, however, this gorgeous but not altogether unintelligent creature threw the door back with a jerk, and remained in the attitude of "attention," upon one side of it, like a pillar of very florid architecture. Frederick stepped into the hall, and the door closed behind him. The house was a very nice house in every respect, but he had rather it had been much less magnificent, with Mary Perling in the drawing-room instead of the housekeeper's room.

"Here is my card," said Frederick, blushing; "I wish to see Miss Perling."

"Miss who, sir?" inquired the footman, placing his head on one side like an inquisitive cockatoo. "I beg your pardon, but I did not catch the name."

"Miss Perling," repeated Frederick, between his teeth, and looking nervously towards the staircase, lest any member of the family might be an involuntary witness to his humiliation.

"Young ooman, a friend of the housekeeper, eh?" inquired the servant, his whole manner changing from obsequiousness to vulgar familiarity. "All right, young man; step down this way, if you please."

Frederick followed this insufferable menial, speechless with rage, and was passing a door on the right hand, when it opened suddenly, and some one cried: "Galton! What, it *is* you? Well, I thought I could not mistake that voice of yours. So you have found me out at last, have you? I am sure I am very glad. Let me have the pleasure of introducing you to my mother: Mr. Frederick Galton, Lady Ackers. We have not done luncheon yet, you see; pray, sit down and join us." Thus spoke Sir Geoffrey Ackers, a college acquaintance of Frederick's, who had begged him (he now recollected for the first time), to "look him up," if ever he came to town.

The canary-coated footman retired aghast at this reception of the "young man;" a butler, more gentlemanlike-looking than most members of the House of Peers, and whose deportment was equal to that of a bishop in full canonicals, placed a chair for him, and handed some chicken salad. "I have heard a great deal of you, Mr. Galton, from my son," observed the hostess, graciously; "and I am very pleased to see you. If you had but called yesterday instead of to-day, you would have met with old friends. Monsieur de Lernay and his daughter were with us."

"He would certainly have come, if he had known *that*," observed Sir Geoffrey, roguishly; "but for my part, I am glad he did not. One can never get Miss Eugenie to listen to a word one has to say, when Galton is in her company. He monopolizes that beautiful creature altogether."

"Then I am afraid it was some hint of her being intimate here, that has procured us the favor of Mr. Galton's presence," remarked her ladyship, smiling. "Monsieur de Lernay was a very old friend of my poor husband, years and years ago. Ah! I remember him, one of the handsomest and most agreeable men of the French court. He is sadly broken, however, now: I should scarcely have known him."

"Indeed!" said Frederick, who, by a great mental effort, had thrust from him all reflection upon the consequences that might flow from his present course of conduct, and was determined to play out the scene, in which he found himself an involuntary actor, as creditably as he could. "Yet he seems to bear his years uncommonly well; while for wit and liveliness I have never seen his equal."

"True, his conversation is coruscating as ever," pursued Lady Ackers; "but the effort is perceptible. You see the wheel of the machine behind the electric sparks."

"Yes; I have observed that," said Sir Geoffrey, "though only quite lately; indeed, since they came to London. I think he is annoyed about the affair between his daughter and Meyrick. They say that is a settled thing. How came you to let that come to pass, my fascinating friend, eh? I thought she was to have been Mrs. Galton."

"Fie, for shame, Geoffrey," said Lady Ackers, gravely; "you must not talk so lightly of the disposal of a young lady's hand. Whoever marries Eugenie de Lernay will be a fortunate man, in my opinion. Her behavior to her father is devotion itself; and yet, I suspect, he is not altogether so charming at home as he is abroad. It is said that our sex are adepts at dissimulation, and have two faces—one for the world, and one for the domestic hearth; but Janus was a male after all."

"My dear mother," said Sir Geoffrey, "I had no idea you were so classical. It must be the presence of Galton which inspires you; he is not only a great classic—who has never been known to use a crib—but also an author on his own account."

"Then I hope he is not one of those who seem to do their best to bring our sex into disrepute. One would think, to read most modern books, that it is women alone who deceive, and truckle, and are dishonest; but that men are always straightforward, honorable, and incapable of baseness and dissimulation."

"My dear mother, Galton will strangle himself in the attempt not to laugh at your enthusiasm. He is already scarlet, and will presently fall a victim to courtesy and chicken salad."

Frederick Galton's face was scarlet indeed, but not with suppressed laughter: Lady Ackers' random shaft had struck home. What a base, truckling hypocrite was he himself—he who was so accustomed to regard the weakness of others with supercilious disdain. Why had not he had the moral courage, nay, the common candor, to say at once, before he had crossed that dining-room threshold: "Sir Geoffrey Ackers, I did not call here to renew my acquaintance with yourself, for I did not even know you lived here. I remember now that I had heard this house belonged to a family of your name, but the coincidence never struck me. I came to see Mary Perling, a respectable young woman of humble birth, who is, I believe, the guest of your housekeeper."

Would it not be better even to confess it now, and exchange the apartment of which he was a tenant, under false pretences, for the housekeeper's room? It would undoubtedly have been very much better, but it would also have been excessively embarrassing. Do not suppose that Frederick Galton did not know what was the proper course to be pursued as perfectly well as I, or you, my most philosophic of readers, could tell him; it is my opinion that he even knew it better. In spite of that hackneyed quotation, *γνωθι σεχυτον*, our fellow-creatures are commonly quite as wide-awake to their own weaknesses as they are to their own interests. Of course, it is but natural they should conceal the possession of such knowledge. The peripatetic proprietors of flowers, though compelled to advertise them as "all a-living and a-growing," are nevertheless at least as cognizant as the very sharpest of their expected patrons of the fact that the said blossoms have only stalks, and that heath, and tulip, and geranium have been but stuck in the mould to sell to the unwary. Who should be better acquainted than themselves with the unhappy truth? They may palliate by arguments of their own their dishonesty in offering such wares for sale; but nobody—no, not Linnæus himself—could be so well persuaded as they of their rootless condition.

Almost all scoundrels are secretly convinced that they *are* scoundrels; they don't want anybody—I mean in the way of information—to tell them *that;* only they defend their own conduct to themselves under plea of "extenuating circumstances," of which the world does not take account; they return a verdict of "Guilty," as honestly as any twelve men that could be got together, only they recommend themselves (very strongly indeed) to mercy, which a jury would omit to do. Thus, Mr. Frederick Galton reproached himself more bitterly, I fancy, than we should reproach him (despicable as he well may seem to us) with his social cowardice; with his falsehood to his friend, with his unchivalric—nay, shameful—conduct to his betrothed bride. Was this, he doubtless asked himself, what a gentleman, nay, what a *man* should do? Ah, recreant knight, whose gilded spurs deserve to be hacked off by the common hangman, shall not I, thy biographer, straightway wash my hands of thee, and decline to describe thy fortunes further? Well, no. Mr. Frederick Galton is not a hero; I never made any pretence of his being such a monstrosity; but he is a young English gentleman, fettered, like his class, by social prejudices, but amiable, affectionate, gentle, talented, agreeable, fit to be passionately adored by any lady in the land. I will stick by him, though, I fear, he will be environed with much evil report; and I shall hold to the last to the belief that he is altogether a superior person, in spite of more weaknesses, and faults, and crimes falling to his lot than happily fall to the lot of most of us more commonplace persons.

When Lady Ackers rose from the table, and Sir Geoffrey observed: "I shall not let my mother inveigle you into her drawing-room, Galton; you must come out with me for a stroll; let us smoke a cigar in the park," then surely was an opportunity offered for an explanation. While the two young men were alone together in the so-called "study" at the back of the house, selecting choice specimens of the fragrant weed, from an enormous stock laid out in drawers, like some scientific collection, what could have been easier for Frederick Galton than to have made his little confession, hitherto unavoidably postponed (as he might have remarked) by reason of the presence of Lady Ackers? Above all, when they were smoking, that period especially suitable for friendly confidences, and even for saying things that cannot be very conveniently said at other times—when they were lounging on that bench in the park with their cigars, I say, Mr. Frederick might surely have made a clean breast of it; and perhaps he would have done so, but for a circumstance which had previously occurred. Just as they left the house, Sir Geoffrey, staring straight before him, in the most unconcerned manner in the world, had made the following observation to his companion: "If you look to the left through our area railings, you will see at the last window next the steps the most beautiful face that you ever beheld in your life, my impressionable young friend, not even excepting that of Mademoiselle Eugenie de Lernay. Don't misbehave yourself, pray, by expressing your admiration. She's a most respectable girl, I understand, a niece or other relative of our housekeeper. But is she not lovely? I protest it makes one quite regret that one is not in a position of life to offer her one's hand and heart. I suppose the butler will marry her eventually—although he's old enough to be her father—and then they will keep a public-house together. Then he will die, and leave her a buxom widow, with the good-will of the business, and she will marry her first love—some dissipated commercial traveller, perhaps—who will take to drink, and beat her. Life has no romance for those sort of people. You saw her, did you not?"

Yes, he had seen her. She was sitting close to the window, to get as much light as possible for some needle-work she was engaged upon. The summer sun had never streamed down upon a face more fair—a happy, contented, trusting, faithful face, whose downcast eyes, unconscious of his presence, shot shame into the young man's soul. He despised, he loathed himself in that he had played so mean a part even for a single hour. But it was too late now.

"You saw her, did you not?" repeated Sir Geoffrey.

"O yes," replied Mr. Frederick Galton, carelessly; "decidedly pretty, *but* (it was odd how vulgar he grew in his hypocrisy) *not quite my style.*"

As he had started upon so false a track, and sailed so far, he thought that it was best to persevere. What did it matter that these mere acquaintances, this Sir Geoffrey and his mother, were not let into his secret? They would know all in time, like other folks. It was once observed to me by a great judge of human nature, that when a man, no matter how sagacious, has made up his mind to commit a crime, from that moment his sagacity deserts him; he omits the most obvious precautions to secure his safety; he overlooks the most plain and damning evidences against him; and thus Mr. Frederick Galton, when he had suddenly decided at the threshold of that dining-room to tacitly ignore his betrothed bride, had forgotten that the instant before, when he gave his card to the canary-coated footman, he had stated and repeated: "I wish to see Miss Perling."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE BOHEMIANS.

WHO has not experienced, after a change however short in his mode of life, the gradual erasure and fading away of his former state of existence, until the present seems the only genuine and real one? The young undergraduate, after a year or two of college life, recalls with difficulty his school-boy days, although they lasted for a decade; the Benedict of a few months can scarcely imagine that he was ever a bachelor; and the widower, alas! in a very little time gets accustomed to his lonely home, or fills the vacant place with another bride. Time does not make blank the pages of the past, but writes, as on a Palimpsest, upon their fading records the story of the present.

After a few short months, it seemed to Frederick Galton that London had been his home for years; nor could he possibly have reproduced in writing the first impressions which the place and people had made upon his mind, although literature had become already his ordinary profession, with little that was strange or captivating about it. His ambitions, if narrowed, had become more definite; his hopes, if they had lost some of their splendor, were in some slight degree realized; his fears no longer existed. Of his future success as a writer for the periodicals, there was no doubt. He was successful—in a very small way, of course—even as it was; he was probably the youngest in all the army of metropolitan *littérateurs*—but promotion does not go in that service by seniority, and only very seldom by purchase. He had brought out his first book, and it had been received as few productions of authors in their minority have been welcomed. I will not say how far this connection with the *Porcupine* had assisted him in this. There are jealousies and enmities enough among the gentlemen of the press, but they all pull together in a most laudable manner upon two occasions: first, in depreciating any "outsider;" secondly, in belauding one another to the public.

Of course, Frederick's book was a volume of poetry. Almost all authors, whether they subsequently make any mark in the world as prose-writers or poets, make their first venture in rhyme. It is said that for a young driver a pair of even-stepping horses are really easier to manage than one, and perhaps this holds good in literature; but, at all events, the fact is as I have said. Were it not ungenerous, and almost a breach of confidence, to let the general public into such secrets, I could mention half-a-dozen prosperous prose writers who have started with steeds in double harness-rhyme, upset the (borrowed) chariot of Apollo, and then wisely given the thing up, and taken to a gig. The majority of popular novelists have in early life written plays which have been damned; but a still greater portion have made their literary *début* with a volume of verses. After the age of four-and-twenty, they never breathe a syllable about this creation of their genius, of which six years before, they were so extravagantly proud; and after thirty, they resolutely deny even that they ever committed such an imprudence. Lucky for them if some kind friend has not preserved a copy out of which to read high-flown sentiments at inopportune occasions to the confusion of their author.

So Mr. Frederick Galton published his verse-book bound in appropriate green, but containing neither the morbid poem (for he had advisers about him) nor the lines to M. P., which Mr. Jonathan Johnson had erroneously supposed to be of a political character. It was really a very creditable little book indeed, although it did not take the town by storm at once—or even afterwards. Most of the reviews spoke highly of it, and every word of praise they said was believed by this (in general) very sagacious young gentleman; some of them, indeed, treated it with contempt, but there was a good and sufficient reason for that too (he was well convinced) in private malevolence. Yet the callow poet writhed under every adverse criticism, and again and again lost his appetite for the day after perusing them. His friends, even his real ones, took care that not a single one should escape his notice; and more than once they themselves gave him their candid opinion upon the performance, which he gladly would have dispensed with. "What did he want of their confounded opinion?" (This was the way he expressed it to himself.) "If they liked the thing, well and good, and it was pleasant to hear them say so. But who had asked them to find fault, he would like to know? Did they suppose he was not at least as alive to his own shortcomings as they could possibly be? Had he or they given the more attentive consideration to the subject? Finally, did they really intend to do him good by such detraction, or merely to make themselves unpleasant? Ah!"

The state of self-delusion which held that gentleman, who, having obtained the senior wranglership at Cambridge, decided not to come up to London until the excitement consequent upon his success had subsided in the public mind, is unassuming modesty compared with the feelings of a youth who has just published his first book of poems.

Mr. Frederick Galton did not forget his personal friends in the distribution of his lyrics. Old Mrs. Perling, down at Oldborough, got a copy, which her daughter Jane read out to her aloud, and many delightful little evening naps were thereby afforded her. Mrs. Hartopp also received the precious volume, and after one very praiseworthy attempt to understand it, placed it reverently upon her little bookcase between the "Whole duty of Man" and Mrs. Glass's receipt book. Everybody who had ever interested themselves in the young author, in fact, received this little acknowledgment at his hands, so that the public were not in reality so much to be commended, as it seemed, for calling for a second edition. Still, they did call for it. This widened the gulf between the undergraduate of Minim Hall, and Frederick's present self beyond all bridging. It was impossible, he had written to his father, that he could now return to the university to pursue studies that were uncongenial, and to submit to regulations that were irksome. He announced this determination with such gentleness and dutiful affection as had moved the good doctor greatly. Absence from his boy had only made the father's heart grow fonder; and when, in the first page of his son's first book, he perceived that it was dedicated to himself, he could hardly read the graceful and affectionate words for tears. He scarcely made any opposition to the young man's taking his own way in life now, since he found it so much to his mind; for, indeed, this period of Frederick's career was no less happy than promising. He was a great favorite with nineteen-twentieths of his associates, and he rather enjoyed the hatred of the remainder than otherwise. Percival Potts and his following were, of course, among his enemies, and the war waged between him and them was unceasing; but he was not afraid of the great *littérateur* in the least, and his satellites he thoroughly despised. Just at present, however, they had him at a disadvantage, on account of his lyrics, which they misquoted unmercifully.

There was a certain literary club, whereof most of the contributors to the *Porcupine* were members, and which Frederick had joined upon his first arrival in town. It met at a tavern, where matters were conducted in a very unpretending way; but it would have been an agreeable society enough, had it not been for Potts. By him the place was turned into a sort of lecture-room, for the piece-meal delivery of his autobiography. Mr. Jonathan Johnson, indeed, now and then rebelled against the oppression exercised by this egotistic creature, but only too often let him rant and rave as he would. When he spoke—and he was always speaking—no other dog dared bark, or even utter a whine of remonstrance. Many suffered in silence, drawing what philosophy they could through their pipe-tubes, for the despotism under which they groaned was mitigated by tobacco; others were mere hangers on of Potts, and liked, or pretended to like to hear him. The former class welcomed Mr. Frederick Galton with secret joy; they shared his aspirations for freedom; and connived at his revolutionary designs, although they lacked the courage to give him any open support. He had gone to this would-be convivial society late one winter evening, after some dinner-party; his father's friends were numerous, and hospitable to him, and he was welcomed at the family tables of many of his college acquaintances; at all events, he had been somewhere where evening costume was *de rigueur*. Now, the Bohemians, the Free Lances of Literature, of whom the admirers of Mr. Percival Potts chiefly consisted, despise above all things a dress-coat, as being the very badge and uniform of the slaves of convention and respectability.

"We cannot," cried one—"we really can *not* permit a man with a white tie and garnet buttons to his waistcoat—"

"And shirt studs of brilliants," added a second.

"And sleeve-buttons of gold," continued a third.

"How they appraise me!" cried Frederick—"how they gloat with their hungry eyes! they are thinking to themselves how they would be off at once to the pawnbroker's, if they possessed but a tenth of these valuables."

"Leave the young gentleman alone!" cried Potts, with a sneer; "he moves in very high society, *Juvenum nobilium cliens;* he is the constant companion of young swells. Let us be thankful that he comes among us humble folk at all."

"My good Potts," returned Frederick, "you are very kind to say so; I trust that I have been always affable to my inferiors. Waiter, fetch me some gin that has been in your master's cellar since the consulship of Manlius, or that remembers the Marsian war."

"Yes, sir—certainly, sir," answered that functionary, and a roar of laughter followed his mechanical reply.

But Mr. Percival Potts was not one of the laughers; he knew, as everybody else did, save the waiter, at whom these classical allusions were aimed.

Mr. Jonathan Johnson, foreseeing horrid war, endeavored to monopolize the attention of the younger combatant. "My young friend," said he, "come and sit by me. I have a very serious matter to talk to you about," whispered he, in a lower tone. "I heard to-day, for the first time, from the good lady in Bolton Row, that you had left her lodgings, without rhyme or reason, these three months, and departed she knows not whither. Now, I have nothing to do with your manner of life myself, but I candidly tell you that I must communicate this fact to your uncle."

"He is quite aware of my present address," observed Mr. Galton, innocently. "I'll tell you all about it some day. At present, let us drink. *Cætera mitte loqui*, if I am not trespassing upon the private preserves of our learned friend yonder."

"A more inane production, even for a boy, I never set eyes on," remarked Percival Potts, addressing himself to a neighbor, but in tones that were quite audible through the room.

There was some murmured reply.

"Praised!" continued the sub-editor, disdainfully, "you should rather say puffed! There are some critics who will write anything for a good dinner, and the young man is very open-handed."

Here occurred an outbreak of that description of mirth which is called "a sniggle."

"Queen Stratonica, wife of Seleucus, had not one hair upon her head; yet she gave six hundred crowns to a poet who praised her tresses, which he sang had the genuine hue of the marigold."

"Good, good!" "Hear, hear!" ejaculated the satellites.

"What a damned trick of it—tit—tit—tit—iteration the fellow has," observed Jonathan Johnson.

"Nothing is easier than to apply stale quotations, if you only carry about with you a sufficient quantity of that sort of rubbish," remarked Frederick, contemptuously; "keep a thing long enough, and a use for it is sure to arise."

"I am afraid, sir," remarked a Pottsite, "that it would be a long time before you or I attained such aptitude—"

"Speak for yourself, my friend," interrupted Frederick, rudely, for Potts could be borne, but not his parasites. "I will tell you a classical story that exactly fits the present case."

Here the waiter entered the room, and whispered: "Mr. Galton, you are wanted; there is somebody below that wishes to speak with you."

"Beg him to wait a moment, if you please," returned Frederick, civilly (for he never in his life omitted to be courteous to an inferior); then, looking straight towards the head of the table, where sat the great Potts enthroned among his admiring friends, he delivered himself as follows: "There was a man in Libya, called Psaphon, to whom nature had been sufficiently indulgent, but who yet imagined himself to be a much more wonderful person than he really was. In order to get others to agree with him, he captured as many birds as he could, as were *just capable of imitating human speech*, and taught them to pronounce these words distinctly: 'Psaphon is a great god.' This done, he set them all at liberty, who filled the woods and fields with this ludicrously mendacious statement; so that many foolish persons hearing that cuckoo-note, began to think that there was something in it. Now, I need not say—"

Almost every man rose to his feet, for, although etiquette did not much trammel the proceedings of that society, an attack at once so bitter, so personal, and so well deserved, had rarely been made; the voice of Potts broke forth in wrath, that of Mr. Jonathan Johnson in mitigation, and a score of faces turned towards Frederick Galton in indignation or approval; but the young man saw only one face, that of Jacob Lunes, the Casterton carrier, and he heard but one voice, speaking in the dialect of Downshire, but with a pathos that is common to every human tongue, when it tells of death and love together: "Coom home, Mayster Frederick; I have come up hot-foot to fetch yer. Coom home, for God's sake, and if thou wouldst see thy fayther once again before he dies."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

EVIL TIDINGS.

THE few words spoken by the simple carrier into Frederick Galton's ear transformed him as completely into another being as magic wand was ever fabled to do. His outward form, indeed, remained unchanged, save that his cheek, flushed with wine and quarrel, turned to a deadly paleness, but his heart seemed to collapse within him, leaving an aching void, and a flood of vague, remorseful memories rushed to his brain, and drowned all present thought. He found himself in the street, and in a cab with the messenger, with the horse going as fast as it could lay legs to ground, before he was well aware that he had left the club-room, with its excited faces and eager tones. Then he cried: "Stop! I must call somewhere: I cannot leave town without—"

"Nay, Master Frederick, but we shall miss the mail," interrupted the carrier, appealingly. "Your father is *very* ill."

"I know that, man," returned the other, fiercely. "He is dying—I read that in your eyes; but for one instant—for one single instant—" He put his head out of the window hastily, so that his spring-hat fell out, and was crushed under the wheels, and cried out to the driver: "Lower Seymour Street. It is on your way—quick, quick!" Then he drew in his pale face, speckled with dirty snow—for there had been a heavy fall for days, and it was now thawing fast—and sat with his fingers upon the outside handle of the door, ready to leap forth without delay. As the cab slackened pace before the house he did so, and opened the front door, and was in the passage in a moment, yet not so soon but that a flood of light poured into it from the ground-floor sitting-room, and a female form came out to meet him, and cast her arms about his neck. He was back again in the cab, after one hurried sentence, and the wheels were in motion, in less time than it takes to write it; while the woman was standing in the doorway, her look of welcome changed to one of wondering sorrow, as she gazed after the retreating vehicle.

The face of Jacob Lunes, too, was altered for the worse. "I am sorry you stopped, Master Frederick," said he, gravely, "since—you must forgive me for saying so—it—" The bluff carrier was about to say something severe upon the conduct of the lad, whom he had known from the cradle, and seen, and probably spoken with, every other day of his life; but the anguish depicted in the young man's features stayed his speech. "The Lord have mercy upon us all, Master Frederick, young and old!" said he instead; "though there are some as seem to be as good as angels already. I am sure your father is as sweet-souled as any fellow-creature breathing; if good wishes can carry a man up to Heaven, the prayers of all poor folks nigh Castleton, sir—Pray, pray don't take on so, Master Frederick! while there's life there's hope, you know."

"Go on, Jacob, go on," sobbed the young man; "it does one good to hear you. I can listen to you now, as I could not do a while ago. Here is the station, and we are in time, thank Heaven! When we get in the train, tell me all that has happened, and do not mind if I don't speak, Jacob—I shall hear."

So Frederick Galton sat in one corner of the railway carriage, where the light from the pale oil-lamp scarcely fell on him at all, and listened in silence.

"It was the night afore last, Master Frederick, and snowing hard, as it had been doin' for a week before, when the doctor was sent for to Nancy Reeves, a laborer's wife, away beyond Bilbury Clumps: I should say five miles or more. It ought to have been a parish case, but your father was allus for sparing that young Union Sawbones. 'And, besides,' says he, 'I can get there in my gig in half the time, and it's ten to one he loses himself in the snow, being strange to the Downs.' Then the poor woman, too—her husband was away, you see, and this her eleventh child—was in that sort of condition towards which I think your good father was more particularly tender. You see, Master Frederick, he lost your mother in childbirth; and all husbands—this is what my old woman says, at least, and she knows a vast—has a sort of claim upon him, as he thinks, so as they should not be left, if *he* can help it any way, all desolate-like, and forsaken, as he himself was, until, leastways, *you* growed up—"

"And afterwards," groaned Frederick, bitterly, "I forsook him, Jacob, *I*—"

"Nay, nay; don't take on so, sir; young men will be young men. You couldn't be expected to be mewed up—he said so himself, he did indeed—in a little country village, being such a clever young gentleman; and he tried to reconcile himself all he could when he was left lonesome-like, and worked—the good gentleman did, even harder than ever. God knows, it was not to get gain neither; *his* visits cost him something, instead of winning him reward, they did, for his hand was open to the poor. You are all that, that I will say; you and your uncle, and your father—none of you knows how to say 'No' when another says 'Give.' Lord! how we have got took in, again and again; but then it ain't lost—that's what my old woman says—it's all kep' an account of; and I wish such a ledger, or anything like it, was awaiting me, as the angel book-keepers have got to show in favor of your father. God bless him! God bless him!" The good carrier broke down for a little while, for he could stand wind and weather better than the telling of bad news. "I ax your pardon, Master Frederick; but he was a good friend to me and mine, was your father, years before you was borned into this world; and at my time of life, why, we don't make new friends."

"No, nor forget old ones, Jacob. Go on; I deserve anything."

"Why, Master Frederick, I meant nothing against you! don't think it for a moment. Of course, a young gentleman like you must make new friends, both men and women; though, as to women, I honestly tell you it give me a turn just now to see the face I did at the door we stopped at. Nothing comes of that sort of thing in the end but sorrow, if not worse: 'in the hour of death, and in the Day of Judgment'—then it's a sad business. I ain't given to cantin' in a general way; but coming, as it might be, from your poor father's deathbed, why, it makes one serious-minded. And I am sorry—though it were no fault o' mine—that it was my cart as she first came in to Casterton."

"Jacob Lunes," returned the young man, quietly, "I know all you would say about that matter, and I am not angry. I have justly earned your ill opinion. But please to tell me now about my father."

"Well, sir, he called up John, and bid him put the young mare in the buggy, although she was rather skittish for night-work, but they had all been out that day save her, and the doctor was always mindful of dumb beasts, and would never use a tired horse if he could help it. He would not let Joe drive the buggy either, but started with the little boy who had come with the message. What a blessed thing, Master Frederick, must it be to lose one's life in thinking for others!"

"I shall never die that way, Jacob," murmured the young man, sorrowfully. "Go on, go on."

"Well, sir, he did not come back that night, nor yet in the morning. At first, we thought it was only that Nancy was not getting over her trouble so easily as usual, and that your father had stayed at the cottage all night. But when in the afternoon the same messenger arrived at Casterton for some medicine the doctor had ordered, 'when he left before daybreak,' we knew that something dreadful must have happened to him. Then you might have seen how dearly we all loved your poor father, Master Frederick. Your uncle, and the Squire, and Farmer Groves, and all as had horses, started off in a great company over the Downs towards Bilbury; for it was plain that he had tried to come back that way, since, if he had kept the main road, the lad must have seen him. After them came well nigh all in Casterton. The blacksmith left his anvil, and the cobbler his stall, for work was not to be thought of while the doctor was missing; nay, even the postman, after his weary day's walk, started off that afternoon across the snowy hills, as though he had never set foot to ground. It was necessary to go over the whole track before darkness set in a second time and fell upon him somewhere, lost upon the desolate white Downs—for that he had come to any harm from the hand of man was out of the question; not a rogue in the county was so great a rascal as to have done the doctor a bad turn; and as for enemies, he had none but Disease and Dirt, as ever I heard him speak of. He was always for whitewashing and window-opening, and such like, to an uncommon degree surely, which only shows that even the best of us has his weaknesses.

"Well, when we had got about three miles out, I was riding my old Dobbin, next man to the parson, but not very close, for we was a-spreading out pretty wide, near a quarter of a mile, as I should say, I see a dark speck on the snow, and it were moving slowly. This was the poor doctor's bay mare, a'most dead beat, hobbling along through the deep snow with two broken traces and a bit of the gig-shaft dragging at her heels. Then we knew that what we was in search of was not far off. It was easy enough to track the wanderings of the poor creature; and presently, all of a sudden—for he was hidden by a great bank of snow—we come, Master Frederick, upon your poor father. He was a-lying on his back, with the gig turned over beside him, and there he had lain for hours and hours, for he couldn't move—no, not so much as turn his head. His poor back were broke, as I believe;

and he must have suffered terrible. God only knows why. Why should I, a drunkard, sir, occasionally, and who minds my own concerns, and don't trouble about the misfortunes of others, have been sleeping in my bed, sound and hearty, all that night, and that good man have lain on the snow-covered ridgeway, with his face to the cold sky? Yet, if you'll believe it, he gave a smile as we came up, and murmured something about how good it were of us to come to seek him; yet how that he had expected nothing less from us. Squire Meyrick was kneeling over him, and weeping like a child; and Mr. Morrit, I never see a man so moved in all my life—and yet such a head left to him. 'We have not brought a doctor with us, William,' said he, 'although Watchem has been sent for; but we have an easy litter and bearers; only you must tell us how we can lift you, so as to cause you the least pain.'

"Then a shudder seemed to fall upon your poor father's face, for he well knew what agony was awaiting him; the pain he was then suffering was dulled and blunted, I suppose, to what it was when he came to be moved, for he fainted right away, before the men got him upon their shoulders. And so we brought him home insensible, thank Heaven; and he was lying in his own bed when he came to again. Then the very word as ever he spoke was, 'Frederick! where's my Frederick?' and Mr. Morrit bid me put-to Dobbin, and take the train to London, and bring you back home at once, wherever I could find you. I was to go to Mr. Johnson's first, as you had changed your lodgings so often lately, and he would be likeliest to know where you were."

At the station, there was a carriage and pair in waiting for Frederick. "He is yet alive," answered the driver to Jacob Lunes—and they wound their way up from the white-sheeted valley to the Downland as fast as the snow would permit. The moonlight shed a ghastly paleness for a little upon all that the snow had spared, and then the treeless tract showed even more unspeakably desolate in the gray and tardy dawn. It was scarcely daylight when they came in sight of the shining Round. How many a morning had smitten that lonely earthen citadel, bringing with it joy and sorrow, life and death, to succeeding generations! From henceforth, neither the romance of history nor the dawn of love was to be associated with that monument of the past in Frederick's mind, but only the sense of loss.

It had not fallen upon him as yet, however, for though the blinds were down, and the shutters closed in all other apartments of the cottage, his father's room, up to the window of which he looked with anxious fear, was not so darkened, and the face of his uncle was at the pane, impatient for his coming.

It was Mr. Morrit who opened the door before the carriage stopped, and took the lad's cold hand within his own, and led him into the house of mourning. Frederick understood the friendly firmness of his uncle's grasp, and returned it willingly. It was no time for quarrel now. They stood at the doorway of his father's room; he had but rarely entered it, and every time he had done so seemed to recur to him during the instant that he paused upon the threshold. He had learned his prayers there. He remembered kneeling down between his father's knees, with his childish hands folded within the doctor's palms, and repeating the simple words which he used even now morning and evening. He remembered with what delight he used to watch him shaving, an operation at once inexplicable and entrancing; and with what less agreeable feelings he was wont to repeat the multiplication and pence tables during other portions of the doctor's toilet. The good man had had such very little leisure, that he had made the most of every opportunity of getting the society of his boy. It was an apartment which he had regarded in childhood with mystic reverence, for his mother had died there. It had seemed so strange that people should die at all, and especially young people; and her picture told him how very young she was.

That portrait, which the doctor had caused to be taken to his son's room, either because he could not trust himself to look upon it, or to show his love by lending him the most precious thing he had, had now been re-transferred to his own chamber. It hung immediately opposite to the sick man's pillow, so that it was always before his eyes. When Frederick entered, the motionless form upon the bed struck him with horror. The doctor was wont to have a brisk and cheery way of looking up at any arrival, even though he knew it was the messenger of tidings which would carry him upon a profitless journey over many miles; but now not a muscle moved. A sort of mellow sadness stole over the gray, grave face; his eyes filled slowly with tears, and his lips gave audible thanks to Heaven for that he had been permitted to see his son before he died. It is a solemn reflection how often we are made the subject of prayer, the topic of spiritual intercourse between our Creator and those who love us, but when he who prays is within a very few hours, perhaps even minutes, of a personal communion with God, how awful is the mention of our name! If the pure in heart shall see Him, Dr. Galton was hastening of a surety into his august presence. Everybody in the room felt that. Mrs. Hartopp stood by the bedside weeping, but not sobbing, for she knew her duty as a sick-nurse too well for the indulgence of such weakness; whenever she had to pass within the range of her dear master's vision, she took care that not a tear should be visible. Mr. Morrit, except that his face was white, remained outwardly unmoved; but when he spoke, his voice was hoarse and broken. The parish doctor, a very young man, and not much used to such sad scenes, was perhaps the most overcome. Dr. Galton had been very kind to him; it was actually in doing him a gratuitous service that he had met with his fatal misfortune. For the present time, at all events, gratitude and pity swallowed up all thoughts of extension of country practice, and promotion by decease.

It was a necessary attribute of Frederick Galton's mind that it should receive these impressions, just as the retina of his eye took in the material accessories of the scene without his volition; but all his thoughts, as all his gaze, were concentrated upon his dying father. He stooped down and kissed his forehead, and then, kneeling by the bedside, hid his face in the coverlet, and sobbed as though his heart would break.

"Robert," said the sick man, plaintively—as though he would have added: "See what a sensitive nature, and how unfitted to battle with the world alone is here!—be a father to my boy."

"I will, if he will let me, William," returned the curate, solemnly, but not without a jar in the words. "He knows what you would wish—he knows—" The sentence was never finished. A sharp pain flitted across Dr. Galton's face—Frederick thought it was an expression of distress at his uncle's tone—and was instantly replaced by a look of measureless content and calm. It was the welcome of the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.

Frederick fainted away. When he came to himself, he was on the sofa in the little dining-room, with his uncle sitting by his head, and touching his temples with eau-de-Cologne. "You and I, my dear boy, are now left alone in the world; your dear father has appointed me to be your guardian; but that is nothing compared to the importance of our being friends. Forgive me for speaking of anything save him at such a time as this; but I know how soon the heart of man grows callous, and forgets such scenes as that we have just witnessed. Frederick, he is gone from earth, but you owe him reverence still. His last thoughts, his last words were for your happiness: if he had had the power, he would have besought you to be guided by me in the one great act, which once committed is irrevocable. I charge you by the remembrance of his love, now quick and warm within you, to promise me that you will never make an infamous marriage."

Jacob Lunes, then, had told his uncle of the face that had looked after them, piteously, as they left it in its solitude in London.

"Sir," answered Frederick, coldly, "I have never contemplated incurring any such disgrace."

"I do not wish to argue, nephew; this is no time for that. Promise me that you will never marry Mary Perling."

"I cannot well do that, uncle."

"Why not, boy? why not?"

Mr. Morrit spoke with impatience, but not with vexation; like one who perceives an obstacle indeed, but also the means of surmounting it.

"Because," continued Frederick Galton, with quiet distinctness, "Mary Perling and I have been married these five months."

CHAPTER XXIX.

CUTTING THE PAINTER.

THERE are many persons, neither unintelligent nor imprudent, who do not possess the faculty of making the best of a bad job. This would seem, at first sight, to be the most ordinary exercise of common sense; yet people, who especially pride themselves upon that very quality, are often the least capable of saying: "Let bygones be bygones," and "Better luck next time." They are so indignant that matters have turned out contrary to their sage expectations, and especially with those who have acted counter to their advice, that they proceed to behave with far greater folly than that which has aroused their wrath. The simple truth that what is done cannot be undone, fails to strike them with the proper force. Prevent, while it is yet preventable, by every possible means, your ward's running away with your footman. Drag the menial by his swallow-tails from the very altar of Hymen, and place his powdered head under the pump. Immure the would-be bride in the second pair back, with nothing but works on etiquette for her mental pabulum. Stick at nothing in the way of asseveration of how you will never advance her a shilling until you are obliged, nor give her intended husband a character for another place as long as he lives. Entreat, protest, denounce; you can scarcely go too far in the way of menace. But if the mischief is actually *done;* if John Thomas *has* married the heiress, she by no means unwilling, how foolish is it to put any of those prohibitory threats in action! It will only make matters worse to keep the young couple in penury; to oblige the bridegroom still to practise his profession in velvet smalls and silk stockings—to carry the poodle of his mistress, when he ought to be walking arm-in-arm with his lawful wife. The better plan would obviously be to settle the ill-assorted pair in some obscure locality, where the man might get accustomed to trowsers, to wearing a hat without a gold band, and be broken as far as possible of his systematic abuse of the aspirate.

But nine guardians out of ten never behave half so sensibly as this. They pretend that they have a duty to perform towards Society, and that an example must be made of Miss Laura Matilda, in order that others may be deterred from doing likewise. Under this transparent falsehood, they work their own private revenge. Society is in reality delighted with the *mésalliance,* which affords it an exciting topic of talk for days; while nothing could afford so much comfort to the injured guardian of social morality as the news that somebody else's ward had done the same or worse. Ordinary folks do not act upon public grounds while there are any private ones to go upon. When some striking event is suddenly dropped into the quiet backwater of our lives, it makes many circles, but the most clearly marked and sensible are those which are close at hand; it concern ourselves, our families, our friends, our acquaintances, always with lessening force, until it scarcely concerns Society at all but only titillates it. Under these circumstances, the devotees who boast of sacrificing to so indifferent a divinity, must be looked upon with some suspicion.

When the Rev. Robert Morrit heard from his nephew's own lips that he had married his late father's household servant, he was honestly outraged and indignant. His language, considering the circumstances—the dead body of him they both loved best in the world being separated from them but by a board or two and the ceiling—was violent, and certainly what the lawyers call "injurious." He accused the young man of systematic hypocrisy and selfish passion. He even went so far as to say that his poor father had met with a kind friend in that death which had spared him the knowledge of his son's unworthiness. But when the first burst of wrath was spent, and he took to talking of the sense of duty that would compel him to visit such unfilial conduct with marked severity, Frederick grew angry in his turn. He had expected an outbreak of resentment, and had made as much allowance for it as could be expected in one of his temperament, but he was not going to be made a public example for his uncle to preach against. In his contemptuous scorn at the exhibition of such vulgar malice, he permitted himself to utter certain home-truths concerning the curate.

"Look you, Mr. Morrit," said he, "I am not a child any longer, so you may spare these remarks for your next sermon. You are speaking out of the bitterness of your own heart, under pretence of inculcating high-flown moral precepts. When all things go just as you would order them, there is not a more smooth-spoken, agreeable gentleman alive. You play the patron very graciously! but let the client presume to think for himself, and you become his tyrant. You, who are all for frankness, can be false, too, when you think falseness will serve your turn. You are not difficult to read, reverend sir, at all."

"Frederick!—nephew! For God's sake, do not speak so loud. Remember where you are, and what has happened. Are you mad?"

"Not so loud!" continued the young man, mockingly. "Ay, that is the parsons' creed all over. Let us be quiet, and shave smoothly. The strength of sin is in being found out. Yes, I do remember what has happened, sir, and I have to thank you for it. But for you and your family pride—which was not so stiff but that it stooped to lies—I should have been in my own home here, along with my dear father, and perhaps he would not have been—"

Mr. Morrit rose, and held up his hand with quiet dignity.

"I say, sir," continued Frederick, but less impetuously, "that had he been left to himself without those worldly counsels, which become the mouth of a clergyman so ill, he would have consented long ago to my marriage. Who are you, that have dared to come with your shallow talk between a father and his only son?"

"I am your mother's brother, Frederick Galton, and I regret to say, of the same blood, therefore, with yourself. I had every right to do all I could to save you—and myself too, if you will have it so—from what I considered, and do consider still, a lifelong disgrace. You have forced this discussion upon me in this time and place—"

"What! *I?*" ejaculated the young man. "I who woke from what I took to be a ghastly dream of my father's death, to hear my wife reviled by your sharp tongue. Indeed, Mr. Morrit, both opportunity and theme were of your own gracious choice."

"Then, in so far as they were so, I am sorry, Mr. Frederick Galton," returned the curate, haughtily. "In the name of common decency, let this matter rest for the present."

"No, no, sir," answered the young man, hotly; "since you have begun, pray finish. There is something behind which you have yet to favor me with. You wear a concealed weapon; come, what is it? you strove to rob me of my father's love; perhaps you have succeeded in persuading him—"

Here the young man paused, ashamed. He was not so blinded by passion but that a remembrance of early days stole in upon his soul, and quenched his speech ere it had reached its bitter end. But a little more than twelve months back, this man, to whom he was attributing such baseness, had been his adviser, teacher, friend, his *beau-idéal* of a Christian gentleman. If any one, a year ago, had told him that he would one day seriously quarrel with his uncle, Robert Morrit, he would have laughed at the absurdity of such a notion; yet now he was upon the point of accusing him, whom he knew to be one of the most generous of men, of covetous greed; nay, worse, of having endeavored to enrich himself in a manner worse than fraudulent at his nephew's expense.

The supposition was hateful, and more like one of those monsters of the imagination that are said to intrude themselves at times into the thoughts of the purest, than any reasonable idea. Yet, strange to say, the curate's countenance did not express either contempt or indignation. It was hard, and even resentful, but there was a shamefacedness about it altogether inexplicable to the young man; and when the answer came, although determined and deliberate enough, it was couched in somewhat of an apologetic tone.

"It is perfectly true, Frederick Galton, that I have succeeded in persuading your father to leave his property in such a manner that I can exercise control over it for the next six years—until, that is, you are of the age of twenty-five; while, if you die in the meantime, I should become the inheritor of all you possess."

Frederick started up with an oath upon his lips, the first the curate had ever heard him speak, the first, perhaps, he had ever uttered beneath that roof.

"Forgive me if I shock you, reverend sir," pursued the young man, bitterly; "I forgot for the moment your peculiar moral organization. You shudder at bad words; the appearance of evil is by all means to be avoided; although hypocrisy and deceit, and fraud should all shake hands together within us, as they have in you, you sanctimonious slave!"

"Take you care, Frederick Galton; take you care," rejoined Mr. Morrit, his voice trembling with passion. "There are some things which, once said, we cannot forgive. I wish to act fairly and justly in the matter."

Frederick laughed aloud. Mrs. Hartopp heard him in that awful chamber overhead, and shuddered. Had her poor young master gone mad with grief? Should she venture down into the parlor? No; his good kind uncle was with him, who would know how to manage him far better than she.

"I repeat," continued the curate, "I do not mean to be cruel—to act otherwise than with the firmness I had always intended; only do not rouse that devil within me, which is in every man."

"What! even in clergymen?" returned Frederick, mockingly. "You astonish me!"

"I will allow you two hundred and fifty pounds a year, which would have been ample for you as a single man; but I will take no notice of such an alliance as you have chosen to form. I ignore it altogether—I will never acknowledge it."

"That will be terrible, indeed, sir," observed the young man, derisively, "your patronage being so indispensable; but, just at present, I am most interested in the pecuniary question. Am I to understand, once for all, that I am entirely dependent upon your will and pleasure for my income; and that I shall be, until the age of twenty-five, a beggar, indebted to you for such alms as you consider sufficient?"

"Such, sir, are your actual circumstances," returned the curate, coldly, "although you need not have expressed them in such offensive terms."

"And if you manage to get me poisoned in the meantime, you will be my sole heir, notwithstanding I may leave wife and children destitute behind me."

"If you die within the period you mention," answered Mr. Morrit, "I shall be your sole heir."

"The very house, then, in which I now stand, is yours for the present, and may be yours altogether; the roof under which I was born may no longer shelter me, unless by your good leave!"

"There is no need to talk of such things as these, Frederick Galton," groaned the curate; "you have said enough already to supply bitter thoughts for my whole lifetime. How did this dreadful talk begin? This last hour, God knows, has been far, far more terrible than any in my life."

"I am truly sorry, sir, to have thus inconvenienced you," pursued the young man, with a savage sneer; "but I wish clearly to understand our relative position. I would not trespass upon your generous forbearance upon any account. I particularly desire to know whether I am your guest, here in my father's house, whether, in a word, it is yours or mine."

"It is yours, Frederick. Your poor father made an especial exception of this cottage when disposing provisionally of the rest of his property, and because there were associations about it doubtless dear to you—"

"Let us waive all that, Mr. Morrit, if you please. The time has long gone by for the introduction of sentiment in any discussion between you and me. Am I the master of the house or not?"

"You are; as, of course you would be," added the curate, hurriedly, "whether it was left to you or to me."

"Perhaps," returned Frederick, cynically; "but, at all events, the house *is* mine. Good. Then, the first use I make of my proprietorship is to request you to rid me of your presence, which is distasteful to me in the highest degree."

"What! Frederick Galton, would you turn me out of doors?" pleaded the curate, with a glance at the little carriage-sweep outside, where a knot of downcast faces were collected, talking together in hushed tones.

"Ay," replied the young man, "that I will; I wish there were more to see you. That is where the sting lies, is it not? But cheer up, sir; you may take your revenge afterward fifty-fold."

Yes, Frederick could even refer to those happy days of teacher and pupil, and the thought of them actually strengthened his vindictive purpose. He saw before him, as he imagined, a hypocrite so adroit and smooth, that he had never been so much as suspected of a baseness—one who had obtained, under false pretences, his own respect and love, and who had gained such influence over his father as to persuade him to wrong his only and beloved son. He could not, or would not perceive the well-meant though most mistaken motive which had prompted his uncle to advise such a disposition of the good doctor's very considerable property. He was ignorant that a clause making the curate heir in case of his own demise before a certain age, was necessary to the carrying out of the intention of the testator. He really believed that Mr. Morrit had robbed him, and, what was worse, was in a position to rob the wife of his bosom, and the children which she might bear to him, in the event of his own death before he reached five-and-twenty. He knew that his uncle regarded his marriage as a family humiliation and disgrace; that he would probably manifest his disapprobation by every means in his power. It galled him beyond measure to be dependent upon him under such circumstances as these, and he cared for nothing, for the present, save to show his contempt and wrath.

Mr. Morrit, on the other hand, was far from satisfied with respect to the advice which he had offered to his late brother-in-law, and, indeed, had importuned him to act upon. The will had been drawn up and signed only a few months before, at a date actually subsequent to that on which Frederick had taken the imprudent step against which it was mainly directed. If his marriage had been known, matters would doubtless have been arranged far otherwise.

Mr. Morrit had intended to use his powers solely for the purpose for which they had been delegated to him, namely to prevent that social catastrophe which had already occurred. They were never intended as an instrument of punishment after the offence had been committed, but so enraged had the curate been on the sudden disclosure of the *mésalliance*, that he behaved and spoke of them as if they were. He knew that he was treating the young Benedict somewhat unfairly, but he had no idea of the proportions his error had assumed in his nephew's eyes. He could not believe, no matter in how ill a light his conduct might appear, that Frederick Galton would seriously insist upon his leaving the cottage. Yet the young man's eyes looked very hard and stern as he stood with his fingers on the handle of the open parlor-door, and motioned with his other hand that his uncle should pass through into the little hall. There is no determination (while it lasts) so immutable as that of passionate, wounded pride. Frederick Galton would have said, "Go!" though all the earthly prospects of him and his depended—as, indeed, it seemed they did—upon his saying the contrary. "You cannot bid me leave this house," appealed his uncle, with a look quite scared at the dreadful pass to which matters had somehow arrived—"with my best friend lying dead in it—my sister's husband—the father of the lad that once—"

"We have had enough of that, Mr. Morrit, and more than enough," interrupted the young man, grimly.

"Permit me to undo the latch. You have forgotten your hat, sir. Here it is. I beg you will not trouble yourself to cross this threshold again."

CHAPTER XXX.

AN UNWELCOME PATRON.

MONEY, let us concede, is not everything, but it is a very great deal. The young philosopher may smile at the solemn manner in which it is referred to by those who show reverence for little else; he may make merry with the serious change that comes over the cheery and good-tempered business man while he is worshipping at Mammon's shrine; but there is really something wondrous and almost terrible in the power of money, and such as belongs to few other things. To have too much of it, it is agreed on all hands to be a very dangerous matter, likely to lead its possessor to his eternal ruin. When Garrick showed to Johnson his villa and his gardens, expecting to hear them admired, the lexicographer greatly disappointed him by replying: "Ah, David, David, these are the things which make a death-bed terrible!" On the other hand, an empty purse is said on good authority to be an equally perilous possession, and indeed has been entitled by a divine of the English church "the very devil." Finally, even moderate wealth has been inveighed against; that fatal gift, a little competence, which prevents a man from exerting his energies and makes him useless all the days of his life.

But where Mammon shows himself most hateful and most strong, is when he is set in opposition to human love; when he stands frowning between two fond hearts that would fain be one; or sits upon the tomb of the dead, and unlinks the loving hands of the survivors, who, now that they have lost their common friend, should surely have journeyed on more closely knit together than ever. What a legacy of disappointment, and jealousy, and hate, do men often leave behind them among those, too, against whom they have had no ill-will! How often has the grave of a parent been the gulf which has sundered brother from brother forever in this world! How often have tenderness, and fostering care, and the self-sacrifice of a whole life, been erased from the conscious heart by a single pen-stroke in a dead man's will! The deepest affection is dried up, the keenest gratitude is blunted; and confidence and filial love—the very elements which have most hallowed the past—are plucked up in a moment by the roots, and cast aside forever. The evil that we do lives after us; and the last deed we do—the making of our will—may sow more ill than all that we have planted in that teeming soil, the human heart, throughout our lives.

When Frederick Galton, having turned his only relative out of doors, shut himself up in his own bed-room, next to that in which lay his father's corpse, it was not only to grieve. His grief was great and genuine, but it was mingled with—I had almost written mitigated by—a bitter sense of wrong. He thought, with tears, of the thousand ways and words wherein the good doctor had shown his love for his son. The driving-gloves that were lying on the hall-table as he came up-stairs; the watch that some one had transferred to his chamber from the pillow of him who had now done with time forever; the Bible which that nerveless hand had given him years and years ago—the sight of these things stabbed him like a sword. But the thought of a beautiful and loving face watching for him with patient sadness, also occurred to him, and stayed his tears for him that had done her wrong, and set his teeth in hate against the officious fool that had advised the doing of it.

Alone, then, in that desolate home, Frederick passed the weary days that elapsed between the death and burial of his father—such days as are like no others in the experience of our lives; when the awful stillness of the house is broken by yet more awful sounds, and strangers come and go at will in the chambers that were once so sacred, and minister to him who cares not now for loving service. The young man need not have been without company, had he been disposed for it. Squire Meyrick (whose son was not at home, it being term-time at Camford) came in person to invite him to the Grange. Mr. Tregarthen called, and was very pressing in his desire to see him. But the orphaned lad would see nobody. He well knew that the chief object of both these gentlemen's visits was to induce him to be reconciled to his uncle, the news of their quarrel having spread far and wide. Wherever the good doctor's death was talked of, the marriage of Frederick was discussed also, and the estrangement that had already grown out of that ill-judged union. Even on the day of the funeral, when half the gentry of the county, who had come over the snowy wastes for miles to do honor to their old friend's memory, were assembled in that low-roofed breakfast-room at Casterton, the conversation turned at least as much upon the son as on the father. How strange and indecent it seemed that Mr. Morrit should not be there among them on such an occasion as that! How resentful must the young man have been of a few words of censure! how impatient of wholesome control! Such conduct towards his natural guardian was not the way to conciliate the public opinion, already outraged by his choice of a serving-maid for his partner for life. And with respect to that matter, what was to be done in future, in case he should choose to live at Casterton? It was quite impossible that their wives and daughters could call upon Mrs. Galton. That would have been an encouragement to every dairy-maid in the country to entrap the affections of her master's son—a positive premium upon that vice which is erroneously called *Pamela,* *or Virtue Rewarded.* And was she really a respectable girl, by-the-by, eh, was she? Then the old gentlemen's heads wagged knowingly, and they whispered to one another in unctuous tones; so that when the poor young man appeared in his sombre garments, pale and haggard, and looking as unlike a gay Lothario as could be, they set him down as a sort of Joseph Surface.

If the gentry of Downshire expected homage from Frederick Galton, or the slightest taste of apology for his late offence against society, in look, or air, or tone, they must assuredly have been disappointed. His manner to Mr. Tregarthen of Tregarthen, the first commoner in the county, and who had married, it was understood, a lineal descendant of William the Conqueror, was at least that of equal with equal. He was courteous as Sir Charles Grandison to all, and acknowledged with feeling their expressions of sympathy; but he understood what was passing through their minds concerning him and his as clearly as though he had overheard their recent talk; there was antagonism between them and him; and in his heart he cursed the social usage which brings together a herd of mere acquaintances to divide the last duties to the dead with his nearest and dearest. Mere respect, however deep and genuine, should not be permitted to walk side by side with love to the foot of the grave, and the sacred tears of grief should be suffered to flow unrestrained and out of sight of curious eyes. Yet rarely, perhaps, had the obsequies of any man been attended by more genuine mourners than followed Dr. Galton to the grave. Almost every man and woman in Casterton, however poor, had put on a piece of crape or ribbon in token of that friend whom all had lost, and were waiting, hushed and solemn, in the church or in the God's-acre. They, too, had heard, and greedily discussed, the breach between uncle and nephew; but they were more immediately and materially concerned in the good doctor's loss than their betters, and it was that which mainly filled their minds. Many a horny hand was raised by that grave-side to wipe away tears from unaccustomed eyes; many a mother held up her child as the dark coffin was lowered into its bed, and bade it look its last upon the best friend that mother had ever had in sickness and in sorrow. Mr. Morrit read the beautiful service for the dead with his usual distinctness of utterance, but every now and then he paused, for there was something in his throat that went nigh to choke him. When all was over, the crowd still stood around the sacred place, as though expecting Frederick and the curate would reach out a hand to one another. Mr. Tregarthen leaned over towards the latter, and whispered something into his ear, but the moment had gone by for the reconciliation, even if he suggested it; the young man had already turned, and was walking homeward with hasty strides.

At the church-yard gate, however, some one hailed him by name, and there stood Mr. Thomas Morrit, holding out five very shaky fingers.

"This is a very bad business, Master Frederick," hiccuped he; "I don't mean my poor friend, your father's death, because death happens to all; but this other affair —your marriage."

Frederick stopped and stared at the audacious speaker with a look of dumb surprise; then he strove to pass on, but the other seized his hand, and shook it in his giant grasp with maudlin vehemence.

"Now look you, Fred, my boy; I'll stand your friend. I've an eye for a pretty girl myself, and can pardon these little peccadillos. You're right enough to have made an honest woman of her—that's what I've said to everybody; and I'll act up to it. Now the day after you bring her to Casterton, my wife shall come over and call upon her—there—that's a bargain."

"You are most kind," answered Frederick; "most kind, I am sure."

He spoke with frightful bitterness, but Mr. Thomas Morrit perceived nothing of that; for not being able to resist the strong liquors, and especially the port, provided at the house of mourning, he had been passing the last hour and a half in rendering himself intoxicated.

Mr. Thomas Morrit seemed to be the only individual in Downshire prepared to forgive the young man the grievous wrong he had committed against society in marrying Mary Perling; he might evidently have done far worse without half the blame, for vice is common enough, it is said, among youth of the first quality; but the folly of a legal union with an ineligible young woman, is almost as rare as it is irreparable. Even Mrs. Hartopp, the housekeeper, had regarded her young master, ever since she knew that he was her nephew by marriage, with at least as much pity as admiration. She acknowledged to herself that he had behaved "very honorable;" but she would rather, upon the whole, that the young couple had never set eyes upon one another. She never opened her lips upon the subject, until he was about to enter the carriage which took him to the railway station on the very evening of the funeral, and then she only observed: "Well, I *do* hope, Master Frederick, after all this sad, sad work," and the old lady shook her head, as though it was not for her to gainsay the opinion of the county, "that Mary will make you a good wife."

"If she does not do so," replied the young man, earnestly, and they were the first healthy, hopeful words which he had spoken for some days—"if she does not make me a good wife, Nanny, it will be my own fault, God bless her! and not hers."

CHAPTER XXXI.

LIFE WITHOUT BUTCHERS' BILLS.

THE marriage of Frederick Galton, bachelor, with Mary Perling, spinster (for so far society and the most respectable Church Establishment in Europe had nothing to object to the contract), had been solemnized in a very quiet and unostentatious manner. It had been a fashionable wedding in this respect, that "no cards" had been issued to the friends of either bride or bridegroom—but in no other. Mary had provided herself, in a marvellous short time, with a very inconsiderable *trousseau*, by the aid of which, however, she somehow contrived to look as ladylike and beautiful as any woman in Belgravia. She was really, to all appearance, a born lady, as her poor father used to say of her, with pardonable pride; but for my part, so far as looks go, I cannot see the difference between persons of her sex who are born ladies and those who are artificial imitations. To know a gentleman from a snob, is easy enough: but to discriminate between two lovely females—unless one of them carries a cotton umbrella, a prayer-book folded up in a pocket-handkerchief, or some other decided badge of social position—is altogether beyond this present writer. I have seen such elegantly dressed and graceful creatures flirting in Kensington Gardens, upon a Sunday, with her Majesty's Foot-guards, as have excited the liveliest apprehensions in my breast with respect to the morals of our female aristocracy. They were doubtless only ladies'-maids, at highest, but who was to tell them from ladies? Females—and especially lovely females—have such a natural aptitude of making the best of themselves; they are so ingenious in the provision of ornament; and beauty itself, although so common, is so dainty and glorious a possession, that I conclude the whole sex to be ladies, as Sir Philip Sidney (or some such military enthusiast) is said to have set down all soldiers as gentlemen.

Even women themselves are liable to be deceived in this matter, as you may tell from the sharp suspicious way in which they scan one another in public, and make their rapid valuations respecting apparel, and the like, as their sisters, who are also unfortunately their rivals, pass by. "Ah, gown *turned;* gloves *cleaned;* parasol only newly *covered*, unless my eyes deceive me," etc. I daresay Mrs. Frederick Galton's toilet was not thought very much of by other newly-married young ladies; although, if valued according to the labor of love bestowed upon it, it would have excelled the attire of a duchess. It had caused sleep to desert dear widow Perling's eyes for nights, not that she sat up like a poor milliner, "stitch, stitch, stitch," at the garments in question, but that she lay awake, hour after hour, thinking of them, and how lovely her dear Mary would look in them. Heaven bless such vanity, say I, and make our nightly thoughts as innocent! She did work at them, a little; she did all that she could trust herself to do. But the more important articles (let me tell you) were town made; Oldborough never turned out the wedding-gown, nor yet the bonnet. It was not an occasion for sparing money, as the dear, good, sensible, economical old soul could clearly perceive. Nobody should be able to put a slight upon her married daughter, with respect to her apparel at least; and it was with a feeling of honest pride, preferable to the humility of most folks, that the old dame refused certain pecuniary help, which Frederick delicately tendered, at this period of necessary extravagance. "My daughter has no dower, it is true," thought the stout old dame, "but it behoves me all the more to see that she has a becoming wardrobe." It was charming to see how perfectly her new son-in-law appreciated her in all that she said or did with respect to Mary. The very subject upon which most men split with their mothers-in-law—

namely, their own wife—was the bond of union between himself and the widow Perling.

When that *éclaircissement*, which we foresaw was an inevitable consequence upon Mr. Frederick's deceptive conduct in Grosvenor Square, took place, Mary's mother had sought him out in person as she had done at Camford. A more vulgar nature would probably have resented this second visitation, but Frederick bore her deserved reproaches as from one who had a right to give them, and did loyal homage to her in his heart at the same time. He had placed her daughter and his intended wife in a very false position at Lady Ackers's. Mrs. Mettal, the housekeeper, had had a bad quarter of an hour with her ladyship, who was of the old school, and a great stickler for the proprieties; and she herself was deeply incensed that a young girl lodging under her particular protection should have been so used. Sir Geoffrey Ackers cut Mr. Frederick Galton dead, as they met face to face in that little passage which leads from Bolton Row to Berkeley street, and where recognition may be said to be a necessity. "The idea of a man having the bad taste to come to one's mother's house to court a maid-servant, and, upon being found out, to pretend to be making a morning call!" He treated the notion of intended marriage as a chimera of Mrs. Mettal's brain, or as an impudent invention of the offender, extemporized to mitigate his crime. It is terrible to think what Mary herself endured among society in that sunk floor of Grosvenor Square during the forty-eight hours which followed her lover's visit. At the expiration of that period, Mrs. Perling (summoned in haste, but not needing to be urged) arrived in town, and took her into lodgings; and then went off to present a piece of her mind to Mr. Frederick, who, as I have said, was pleased to receive it very graciously.

"I have behaved," confessed he, frankly, "like a snob and a fool in one. Nothing you can say, madam, can make me experience a keener sense of shame and degradation than that which I already feel. I have no excuse whatever to offer for my baseness; but I will make what reparation I can. I will marry dear Mary immediately —that is, if she will have me."

And dear Mary was much more forgiving than he deserved, and consented so to do. Mr. Frederick Galton therefore procured a license, after that very moderate delay which the law interposes between two devoted souls who have contrived hitherto to exist in separate parishes, and took unto him Mary Perling to wife. The widow was present at the wedding, but not Jane; a convenient indisposition prevented her coming up from Oldborough. It is better, thought she to herself, that one like me, a poor cripple in a cotton gown, should be absent on such an occasion. It was bliss enough for her to work at the *trousseau*, and to select the flowers for her sister's bouquet, and for the adornment of her new London home. The marriage was to be kept a secret for the present, until some opportunity should arise—which we know, alas! it never did—for breaking the news to Dr. Galton. In the meantime, Mr. Frederick worked very hard at his profession, in hopes to be able to give a good account of his prospects, whenever the necessity for disclosure should come, as well as to provide for present needs.

This latter task, even at the very starting-point of his matrimonial career, was not an easy one. His allowance from his father, although amply sufficient for himself, was not enough for two. Had Mary been as good a manager as her sister, he would probably have lived as cheaply as a bachelor; for a wife who knows her domestic duties is an absolute saving to a man, all the nonsense that has been talked concerning the three-hundred-pound-a-year marriage question notwithstanding; but Mrs. Galton had very imperfect notions about domestic economy, and those only adapted to a country life. Frederick himself, although not extravagant after the manner of many young gentlemen of the town, who cannot pass a haberdasher's window without coveting some scarf, at once beautiful and chaste, or a jeweller's without hankering after some pin to stick into it, was, to say the least, of expensive habits. He had never been under the necessity of denying himself an ice, if he was hot, or a cigar, if he was cold, or a cab, if he felt weary; and these little luxuries, to which there can surely be no objection to any man's indulging in upon any one day, cost *annually*, (for he had once the fancy to keep an account of them for a whole year) exactly £115 14*s*. 1*d*.

It will perhaps be remarked that this must have made a large hole in the young man's allowance, and have reduced the rest of his income to within very narrow bounds; and so it did: yet what remained was quite sufficient for him, since he did not fritter any of it away in paying the bills of tailors, shoemakers, and the like, which were permitted to "run on," in accordance with their respective wishes. Human life has never, that I am aware of, been apportioned into such epochs, but it might very well be divided into, first, the period at which everything is paid for one; secondly, the reason when some things are paid for one, and not others; thirdly, that evil stage of life when we have to pay for everything ourselves; and, finally, that terrible era when we begin to defray the charges of other people. Frederick had, of course, reached the third of these landings on the mortal stairs, but it was pleasant to imagine that he was yet upon the flight below. The poetry of life had received a shock or two—he had defrayed his own washing bills for months—but it was still fresh and vigorous. The vulgar realities of existence had not yet presented themselves—for the paying of one's dinner at a club or at an hotel is not like discharging a butcher's bill or a fish-monger's—but he had had an indistinct idea that they were gathering about him. Still, when they did come, was there not always a powerful Prospero in his father to still the tumult of such a sea of troubles with one motion of his friendly wand?

When to the summer haze of literature and social enjoyment which surrounded him was added the dreamy love-light of the honeymoon, things did not wear a much more practical shape. The young fellow was too thoroughly enchanted with his domestic fairy, to suffer her to play the housewife, although she would very willingly have done so. He put off all her questions as to expenditure with jesting answers; and then protesting (falsely) that she pouted and was very cross, he gave her to pay the bills with—twenty kisses. She began to think that it was, perhaps, only her inferior breeding that led her to be solicitous about pecuniary cares; and being, above all things, desirous to make him forget *that*, she ceased to trouble him with such vulgar inquiries as "Can we afford it?" or such uninteresting scraps of information as that the grocer's young man had "called again." After all, there was not much harm done, if events had taken the course that was most probable; filial confession, tender reconciliation, payment in full by cheque, was the comfortable programme that Frederick had sketched out for themselves in his own mind; and now, alas! all upon a sudden, Prospero lies dead, and his wand has been taken fraudulent possession of by cruel uncle Caliban.

Doubtless, the remembrance of many an unpaid bill—the existence of which had never hitherto troubled him—had risen up before poor Frederick's vision in that hour of quarrel with the curate, and stung him into bitterness and insult, when patience and gentle words might have healed all.

CHAPTER XXXII.

SOMEBODY COMING.

MARY, of course, had heard by letter from her husband concerning the death of Dr. Galton, and it had distressed her very much. She had never received anything but kindness at the hands of that worthy and gentle man.

It was doubtless a relief to her that that disclosure concerning the marriage, which had hung over her in a more menacing shape than it had appeared to Frederick, who was assured beforehand of the paternal forgiveness, would now be no longer necessary. People might henceforth know of it at Casterton and Oldborough, as some already knew in London. Still her loving heart was grieved, and she reproached herself with having had a share, however innocent, in keeping the old man asunder from his son in his last days.

Frederick had arrived by an earlier train than he had calculated upon, and, letting himself in by a latch-key, had come upon her unawares at home. She was in deep mourning, which admirably set off her delicate beauty, and her face was pale and sad as a drooping lily. She was plying her needle busily by lamplight, but every now and then she looked up from her work to a little portrait of her husband which she had set upright on the table before her. Its original stood behind her before she had time to put it aside, which was, perhaps, why she blushed so as she gave that little cry of loving welcome. Her simple joy at seeing him gladdened Frederick to the core; the possession of the devoted love of this beautiful and tender-hearted girl might surely console him for the loss of many things. Wiser men than he had not only risked but incurred certain ruin for a less priceless pearl of womankind; and was he to repine because this had cost him a few hundreds a year?

"My darling, darling wife, you are now all in all to me," cried he, in a rapture.

"All in all to him," murmured she, like the cooing of a dove as he clasped her in his arms. Such are golden words, stereotyped instantly upon the tablet of a woman's heart; and not to be erased by any wrong that the speaker may subsequently do unto her, nay, nor even by the long corrosion of neglect.

"Yes, Mary, we two are alone in the world now—quite alone."

"I know, I know, love," answered she, plaintively. "How I wish, ah! how I wish we had told him—" Here she stopped, for it was Frederick himself who had been always for procrastination with respect to acknowledging his marriage.

He answered a little dryly. "That cannot be helped now, Mary, though it was unfortunate—I cannot say how unfortunate. It was not of my father's death that I spoke when I said we two were alone in the world. I might have almost said we were alone *against* the world."

"Oh, Frederick, what *do* you mean? Are they all so angry then—so very, very much ashamed of me?"

Ashamed of her! If any man could have looked unmoved upon that face, turned passionately upwards towards his own, and pleading with all the eloquence of youth and loveliness against the stern decrees of etiquette, it was certainly not Frederick Galton. Ashamed of her! No, let the painted old hag Society shake her palsied head at him till the feathers came out of her wig! Ashamed of her! no, he was proud to call her wife.

"The opinion of the Downshire folks, my darling, concerning our marriage, has not been officially conveyed to me; and, to tell you the truth, I don't care three farthings about it: but my uncle Morrit is very wroth."

"I am afraid he does not like me at all," said Mary, dropping a tear or two. "He was very hard to us at Oldborough. But surely your poor father's death has softened him. Dear, dear me, and a minister too!"

"Yes, Mary, he has always had the will to do us mischief, and now he has the power. My father has most unfortunately left me dependent on him until I am twenty-five. He refuses to allow me a shilling more than I have already. He will not pay one of our debts."

Mary Galton sank into a chair, and covered her face with her hands.

"Come, darling, don't give way like that. We are not so poor that we shall starve. You will have to put into practice all those little economies which you used to be so inclined for; that is all. Why, I thought you had a brave heart."

And Mary Galton *had* a brave heart; never beat a braver one beneath woman's breast—and women in cases of this sort are braver than men. She was not afraid for herself. She would rather, as far as she was concerned, that they were both poorer folks than they were even now like to be; that they lived together in some humble cottage like the Limes, where she might earn something towards the common maintenance. But Frederick, being of the male sex, imagined she was weeping upon her own account.

"Come, cheer up, my pet; things may not turn out so bad as they look at present," said he. "I flatter myself that a day will come when my pen will win for my wife all that is necessary for her, without the aid of any man."

"Oh, Frederick, I was not thinking of that," cried she, passionately. "What does it matter though I were poor, and badly lodged, and coarsely fed, and clothed quite otherwise than in things like these! I am used to poverty; it is my natural condition; and I ought to have remained in that state of life to which God called me. I have dragged you down to my own level."

She rocked herself pitifully to and fro; and when her husband laid his hand upon her, soothingly, she shrank from his touch.

"I deserve no love," moaned she; "a good girl would not have acted as I have done. Jane thought so, and so did mother too, I know."

"Mary, darling—my own dear wife, pray, pray be calm. There is nothing done that I would wish undone—nothing."

"Yes, yes," rejoined the young girl, shaking her head so vehemently that her hair broke from its silken bonds, and decked her shoulders and neck and bosom with a thousand golden links—"there is much done, and grievous harm. I have come between you and those who love you. I have separated you from your equals and your friends. Oh, why was I ever born to work such woe!"

"Then do you regret that you have married me, Mary? Do you wish to leave me?"

"I wish to die!" interrupted she, with a passionate cry, "but not to leave you. If I could not do that months and months ago, having only seen you, and heard you speak, how can I do so now?" She raised her tearful face, and looked up into his, as though to seek excuse or mitigation, and her lips moved in devotion, like those of some innocent penitent, who, at the shrine of her patron saint, accuses herself of some peccadillo which she calls crime.

"But, my own darling," reasoned Frederick, interrupting with a kiss a large round tear which was about to flood a dimple, "since you can't make up your mind to leave me, and since I would not exchange you for a cargo of princesses, if you could, why should we make our lovely cheeks into watercourses all about nothing? Upon my word, it is not complimentary to my talents to conclude that they will not save us from ruin, far less be a sufficient support for you and me."

"For me, Frederick, yes, or even for you, *alone*. But for me, you would have gained fortune, fame, position, and a wife in every way more worthy of you—except that she could not love you more than I do. I feel,—ah, me! like some selfish wretch, who, drowning in the river of life, have cast my arms round your neck only that we may drown together."

"And a very pleasant way of getting out of the world, too," replied Frederick, gayly. "Too much Malmsey was nothing to it. Put your arms round it now, my pretty one. No, Mary, you are no millstone; you will sustain me rather in the troubled waters of life. It is good for a man to have some one to live for, some one to work for, some one to love, besides himself. If he can keep himself, he can keep a wife; what is enough for one, is enough for two.

"'Look through mine eyes with thine. True wife,
Round my true heart thine arms entwine;
My other dearer life in life,
Look through my very soul with thine!'"

But Mary's eyes were downcast, and their gaze was fixed upon the work she had hastily thrown aside when her husband came in. "What! you like hemming and sewing better than me, you puss, do you?" continued he, lovingly; "or are you thinking of helping to support the establishment by taking in needlework? What is all this bordering and lace-work? What queer little garments! Is it dolls' clothing for a charitable fancy fair, you benevolent fairy?"

"No, Frederick, dear, dear husband, it is not dolls' clothing; it is— What is enough for one, is enough for two; but will it be enough for *three?*"

"Oh, there's Somebody coming, is there?" returned Frederick, ruefully.

"I think—I am afraid there is," murmured the young wife. "How happy and thankful I was about it an hour ago! but now— Oh, husband, husband dear, what *shall* we do?"

"Christen it, I suppose, when the time comes, my dear, as likewise get it vaccinated," observed Frederick, comically. "In the meantime, it's no use anticipating the washerwoman by crying over its things." He stooped and touched her forehead with his lips, and spoke as gayly as he could, for he knew that she needed comfort; but he was very far from gratified by the news. "Somebody coming, is there?" repeated he, thoughtfully. "Well, well, so be it. But don't 'take on so,' Mary, darling, as Mrs. Hartopp used to say, just because I can't say: 'Welcome, little stranger'—like a lace pincushion."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

NOT A HAPPY FAMILY.

SOME time has elapsed since the period of the last chapter, which, however, can scarcely be reckoned by years. But what does it matter? Human life is like an Alpenstock, the length of which is as nothing to its proprietor, compared with its notches, each the record of some remarkable event. For who but one who has vegetated rather than lived, cares for the date upon which this and that may have occurred to him? "It was in '34—no, let me see; yes, it must have been in '34, or was it in '35?" etc. Who cares? Man grows old, ay, and young, too, in a day; and the London street child, who dies so early, lives a longer life—with all respect to the calendar—than the gray-haired sire of the village. Since the actors in life's drama, rapt in the event, are themselves so careless of the epoch, how strange it seems that we, the spectators, should be so solicitous about the matter! If I err in time, however, by a month or two, let me at least be particular about the place.

Scene, a little house, frightfully dear, abutting on Park Lane; *hour*, early morning, or, in other words, 10.30; *dramatis persona*, a girl with all about her that youth, and beauty, and wealth can give, and yet who is evidently not happy. It is not the pale cast of thought alone (although hers is a very thoughtful face) which, reversing Pygmalion's miracle, makes alabaster of that noble brow. If her figure were not so admirably proportioned, showing no trace of the ravage of sickness, one would say she had been suffering for years from physical pain. Her features have that concentrated calm about them, which is not resignation, although it shows the determination to bear. Her morning attire is faultless; but the knowledge of that fact should not have prevented one so fair and young from glancing at the mirror, before seating herself at the breakfast-table alone. She does not glance therein, however, although there are many mirrors. The one above the lace-hung mantlepiece reflects four others, so that it is difficult to tell what is space and what is only mirage in that splendid room; moreover, at the west end of the room, over the fireplace, there is quite an optical delusion in a framed and gilded piece of plate-glass, yet no mirror, which looks out into a flower-filled conservatory, and so through open windows (for it is summer-time) into the park. It is altogether as fair an indoor scene as Wealth has ever bidden his servants, Fancy and Good Taste, to conjure up. One would have thought it almost happiness to sink upon the yielding damask of that gilded chair, and take in such light and color with half-shut eyes—to let the scented coolness of the place breathe over one until the senses slid to fairyland. But she who yonder sits, with her sweet chin sunk in her white hand, takes nothing of these seeming beauties in: if that rare boudoir had suffered sudden change, and noiselessly become a dining-room in Baker street, she would scarcely have noticed the transformation. If, for the pink egg-shell china of the breakfast service, had been substituted delf, it would have been all the same to her. When the children of earth are sick at heart, no toys can gladden them, bought at whatever price.

There were letters lying at her dimpled elbow, and she had given them one indifferent glance as she came in; but there they lay unopened, perfumed, delicate. Dainties of all kinds wooed her palate; hot meats which preserved their heat in silver dishes, fed by crocus flames; fruits decked with flowers; conserves as fair to sight as taste; but she touched none of them. She looked out on some vanished past with tearless eyes, and fed on *that*. Presently a heavy step sounded even on the well-carpeted stairs without; a gruff voice, muttering some ribald tune, made itself heard through the close-shutting quilted doors. Then the fair face grew sterner, colder; but the eyes were no longer vacant; they saw (it was plain) the man that was coming even before he came. No wonder they gave forth no smile of welcome. Youth was the sole outward advantage that the new-comer possessed, and even *its* fair impress was defaced and blurred. His eyes were red, his cheeks were bloated, his voice had the roughness which results from continual indulgence in strong drinks.

"Why, in the name of all the devils, is there no iced soda-water?" cried he, looking round him savagely.

The woman did not speak, but motioned towards a silver table-bell. He shook it passionately, as a dog shakes some object it does not understand.

"That is not the way," cried she, quietly; "touch the spring; so."

"Curse the spring!" returned the young man. "You are always so precious clever, you are. Why can't you have bells like other people? I hate this room, I tell you. I can never tell whether I am standing in it upon my head or my heels. Damme, it's always full of people."

A glance of ineffable scorn passed over her face.

"What! I'm always drunk, am I? and that's why, You are much to be pitied, *you* are! Ah, yes, you needn't speak; I know what you are thinking; you are thrown away upon me, eh? Beautiful tender flower, only fit to be in a hot-house, this rough weather of mine don't suit you. However, as it is, you are my wife." He spoke the last words slowly, dwelling upon them with malignant pleasure, like some unjust judge passing sentence upon his private foe.

"Sir, you need not remind me," returned the girl, unable to restrain a shiver such as comes over one at recollection of some loathsome touch of crawling insect or of trailing reptile; "you are my lawful lord."

"But not your *love*, you minx," returned the other, swiftly; "you dare to tell me that?"

The faithful mirrors flashed the news about that here he shook his fist in her white face. "Do you know why I do not strike you, madam?" he muttered between his teeth.

"No," said she, with calm contempt; "as I live, I cannot tell."

"Because it would spoil your face—my fine French lady's face, for which I have paid so much. I would not break this egg-cup, for the same reason."

He took the thing he spoke of in his hand—a tree of rarest china, with a boy climbing up it in search of eggs, and placing his hand within a bird's nest, which was the cup itself.

"By Heaven! what have I not paid? Why, you jade, I might have bought two as fair as you for half the money; and yet, I'll wager you are not grateful. Your father, too—"

"John Meyrick!" cried the girl, rising sudden as a ghost, and confronting her husband face to face—so near, that her breath stirred his brown hair while she was speaking—"ill-use *me* as you will; call me bad names; curse, strike me—and if you strike me dead, I'll thank you for it. But spare my father. Even you, I think, have a fondness for your mother. Well, he is father and mother, and all to me, and I have no other friend in the whole world!"

He stepped back a pace or two, admiringly, like one who regards a picture lately purchased, and although by no means at a bargain, yet which is worth all the money. "Now, I like you so," said he; "I mean your face. When you have got your airs on, it doesn't suit me; but, just as now, submissive and asking favors (which I don't mean to grant), then it really pleases me. This spendthrift father of yours—there, it's not worth a shilling now—is, I was about to observe, as rapacious as any pike. Although he has persuaded the governor to come down uncommon handsome, yet I protest I have no money to spend; all goes in gimcracks, like these of his own choosing. It is a very fine thing to have taste—but to gratify it at other people's expense, that is the act of a—What do you call him in your country, madam? We call him here a swindler. Why do I let him furnish my house, invite his own friends, give entertainments at my expense? Ain't I the most good-natured man in the world? Why, I say—"

There was a noise at the handle of the door. It did not open softly and quickly as usual. Before it did so, the girl was seated quietly at the breakfast-table, pouring out tea, and her husband had snatched up the newspaper.

"My dear Eugenie," exclaimed the new-comer, gayly, "you must forgive this wicked old father, who is late again. It is said that all aged persons are prone to rise early, in order to get as much out of life as possible; but if so, *ma foi*, I must still be young! As for you two, you are mere children—babies. What a charming English picture is here! The wife employed in her domestic duties; the husband reading—what do you call it—the City article?"

"And cursedly stupid, too," responded the young man, gruffly.

"Of course, it is stupid, my dear John—how well you look, by-the-by; I suppose your hair curls naturally, like my wig—but then it is so excessively rich. You cannot expect everything. I feel getting stupid myself, living in such exceedingly fine clover here; thanks to you, my young friend."

"It costs a pretty penny, sir," observed the other, coarsely.

"Ah, I like that expression—a pretty penny! The endeavor to lighten the prosaic dulness that clings to all current coin by such a form of words is really estimable. Yes, your father writes that he thinks we have been a little extravagant; but very wisely adds: 'I have every confidence, however, that the money has been well spent.' He is pleased to think that his son is in the best society that London has to offer; that nothing vulgar, not to say low or contaminating, is mixed up with his life. My dearest John, is it possible that you are taking brandy in your tea?"

"Well, a fellow must have something, sir. I feel a cup too low this morning. The fact is we kept it up till rather late last night—I and some—some university men."

"As I saw them from my window, they did not look like university men," returned M. de Lernay, quietly; "but perhaps that was because they were disguised in liquor. Seriously, John, I don't think your father would be pleased if he knew that this sort of thing was going on. He relies upon Eugenie and me to make you a good boy. We have taken you in hand, we two benevolent missionaries; we are civilizing, I do not say the noble savage, because that would be rude, but one whose education has been somewhat neglected and certainly cut short. You know what your father said when you had to leave college in that sudden manner?"

"Yes, I know," muttered the young man. "What is it you want now?"

"Nothing, nothing," returned the count with sprightliness, helping himself to caviare; "only let us be dutiful, and cultivate good society. I was thinking, last night, how admirably the drawing-rooms in this pleasant house of yours are adapted for charades."

"What's that?" inquired Mr. John Meyrick, sulkily.

"He doesn't know what charades are!" exclaimed the count, regarding his son-in-law with the horror of a conscientious magistrate, before whom is brought a witness who does not understand the nature of an oath.

"Have what you like, then!" roared the young man, savagely. "Whatever it is, it can't be worse than the other tomfooleries. I hate 'em all, for my part."

"Then you wouldn't like to take any other *rôle*, I conclude, my dear John; otherwise we should be glad of your services. I don't know anybody who would shine better in an unconcerted piece, like *Valentine and Orson*, for instance."

"Don't make a fool of me!" growled Mr. John Meyrick. "I don't believe you."

He scowled under his knitted brows at Eugenie, as though he would say: "*You* shall pay for this, madam."

"Or shall we have something out of your Shakspeare?" pursued the old man, musing. "*You*, of course, like all Englishmen, adore him. What say you to that scene from the *Merchant of Venice?* Come, you know something of the Jews, John; do you not think I should make an excellent Shylock?"

No man ever looked or spoke less like a Jew than M. de Lernay, yet he believed what he said. He had an overweening confidence in the versatility of his own genius; and he had his countrymen's hunger for praise.

"Come," reiterated he, "should I not make a good Jew?"

"Ay," returned the young man with a sneer, "you would do that."

"Then there is Portia," resumed the Frenchman, airily. "Will my beloved Eugenie play that part, making a lawyer's wig and gown the most becoming of all possible garments?"

"I shall have acting enough to do, papa, without that," replied his daughter, wearily.

"That is true, love. You will play the hostess, always a weighty task; and yet you wear it like a lily. I think Mrs. Meredith shall be Portia. Yes; she has unexceptionable ankles, and her hair is not too massy for the wig."

"That will never do, papa."

"Yes, it will do," cried Mr. John Meyrick, with some enthusiasm. "If that's charades, then I like them."

"We are in the hands of the lady of the house," observed M. de Lernay, calmly. "When she says 'No,' that is sufficient for all gentlemen. I tell you—if there is a difficulty about getting a lady actor—who would make up a capital Portia—Frederick Galton."

Mr. John Meyrick leaped from his chair, with an execration, and slapped the table with his open hand, so that the eggshell china danced and danced again.

"You seem very pleased," observed M. de Lernay, quietly. "But you frighten your wife, sir, by being so vehement. See, she has turned quite pale. Sit down, I say."

When a person of usually polite manners utters words such as the last four, in the tone in which a sportsman exclaims: "Down charge!" to his refractory pointer, they mean something more than they express. In the present case, they meant: "You vile young cub! Do you dare to put yourself in a passion with me, who have got the whip-hand of you in every way; who can tell worse things of you than are already known, and upon whose report of your behavior hangs much of your future fortune, and all your prospects of ready money?"

Mr. John Meyrick sat down accordingly, muttering to himself a string of terrible expletives, but with the subdued air of a repentant sinner telling his beads.

"Yes, we will have Galton," pursued the Frenchman, reflectively. "The Ackerses are out of town, so he can come without the chance of anything unpleasant; although why they should have cut him, I can't imagine."

"Married their maid-servant," grunted Mr. John Meyrick.

"Well, and what then? There was a rival the less for Sir Geoffrey and for all other marrying young men. You sneer; that is because you are a fool, my dear young friend. Mr. Frederick Galton, without rank, without fortune, without birth, was only, as your Wilkes has said, half an hour or so behind the very best of them. He has grace, beauty, and wit; and, ah, he has youth, youth, youth!"

The old man dropped his voice; and playing softly upon the table with his fingers, hummed the first verse of a love-song.

"They say he beats his wife," observed the young man, maliciously.

"They say what is not true, then," exclaimed Eugenie, helping herself to coffee, with an unsteady hand.

"And how the devil should you know that it is not true?" retorted her husband, furiously.

"Because Frederick Galton is a gentleman," observed M. de Lernay, sternly; "and gentlemen neither beat their wives nor swear at them."

"You should hear Potts talk about it, then—that literary fellow," continued John Meyrick, doggedly.

"Ay, Potts shall be the Duke," mused the Frenchman; "he is pompous enough for anything; and his friend, Jonathan Johnson, shall be Antonio."

"Ay, Jonathan Johnson, too, was telling the other day how Galton was going to the dogs," continued Meyrick.

"A poor marriage always turns out unfortunately," remarked M. de Lernay, with a half-glance at his daughter.

Eugenie smiled wearily, then sighed.

"But Johnson says that even the girl has not bettered herself by becoming Mrs. Frederick. None of her own sex will visit her, of course. She's as poor as ever she was, and worse, because they're over head and ears in debt. And yet they live at Somers Town. Why, Potts told us, you remember, sir, that they had scarcely enough to eat at home, although Galton himself is still pretty welcome everywhere. I should think Mary Perling—"

M. de Lernay was taken with so violent a fit of sneezing that the end of the sentence was inaudible.

"I never knew any mixture do that before," remarked the Frenchman, tapping his snuff-box. "Will my darling Eugenie walk with her father in the park this morning, before the heat comes on?"

"One moment, papa," said the young girl, quietly. "My husband was making an observation which he did not complete. You were saying, sir?"

"I don't know what I was saying," returned Mr. John Meyrick, yawning. "Whatever it was, I didn't say it to you, Madame Curiosity. I shall go in here, and have a cigar."

With these words, the young man rose, and entered the conservatory, where he could still be seen through the window-mirror, lolling among the flowers, and smoking.

"Papa," said Eugenie, looking at her father, fixedly, and speaking in a low, earnest tone, "is it true, what that man said?"

"I am sure I don't know, my love," returned the other, carelessly; "it is perhaps as true as most gossip. I dare say the young fellow is tired of his vulgar toy by this time. They are also in debt, I believe. I have been in debt myself, yet here I am, you see." He looked around him upon the world of damask and gilding, and lace and crystal, with a triumphant air.

"The name, the name?" repeated she, impatiently. "Did I hear that name aright?"

"Yes," returned the old man, harshly. "I thought you knew."

"You thought I knew that Mary Perling was starving—his own sister, the sister for whose sake *he* saved ours, and I *here!*"

"My dear child, people say 'starving' in this country when they speak of anybody who has less than five hundred a year, and lives at Somers Town."

"'She is as poor as ever she was, and worse, because they are over head and ears in debt,'" repeated Eugenie; "'they have scarcely enough to eat at home'—that is what he said."

"They want money, of course, my dear; everybody does, so far as I know."

"Mary Perling wants it, and we have it, papa—is that not so? This has been kept from me very cruelly."

The ordinarily unruffled brow of M. de Lernay grew black with wrinkles.

"You have no right to spend your husband's money, Eugenie, in such a fashion."

"What! papa!" Her dark eyes glittered, but not with tears, her pale cheeks burned with shame, but not for herself. He rose, and stepping to the nearest looking-glass, attired his painted face in smiles again.

"My love, that is my own opinion, certainly," returned he, gayly; "but I know so little of money matters, it is quite possible that I may be wrong."

"You *are* wrong, Monsieur de Lernay. Look you," said she, "if one sell's one's house, or land. or jewels to another, we do what we like with the proceeds: and if one sells *one's self*" (she touched the ring upon her finger scornfully), "do you mean to tell me that one may not spend the purchase-money as one will?"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

GATHERED THREADS.

WHAT was the precise nature of that high crime and misdemeanor for which Mr. John Meyrick had to leave college suddenly, there is no need to inquire. There are persons within everybody's circle of acquaintance who have had to do the like, without an explanation being offered, and I think we take an interest in them on that very account. Mystery lends its charm to the most commonplace of mortals, and since the young Squire has but few intrinsic merits of his own, let him have the benefit of that. Whatever was his error, we may be sure that it was complicated by "drink." He was not the man, as the phrase goes, to set Cam or Isis on fire, but he may have attempted, in his cups, to set fire to Minim Hall. At all events, that institution had declined to retain him any longer. He was not privately withdrawn —recommended change of air by his medical adviser— but downright expelled. The old Squire at Casterton, not a person of delicate organization, was grievously shocked. The Meyricks had never been a brilliant family; but his son and heir was the first of his race who had publicly disgraced himself, and given such credible promise of going to the dogs. When all persons connected with the young man were, as it were, turning up their coat-sleeves, with the avowed intention of washing their hands of him, M. de Lernay came forward in the character of guardian angel. It was terrible that the prospects of a really well-meaning, though volatile young man should thus be blighted in the bud. There was only one way to keep him out of bad company, for which he had exhibited so overpowering a predilection: he must marry some girl of good connections at once, and so be surrounded by a ring-fence of the best society for the rest of his existence.

Such a sovereign remedy was not, of course, to be procured except at a great price. Miss de Lernay, the report of whose attractions had made Mrs. Meyrick rather uncomfortable at one time, was now no longer an ineligible bride for her only son. The Squire bluntly vowed that the young scamp might think himself lucky to get her. If Eugenie was not enamored of this young gentleman just at present, as her father admitted, the dislike would doubtless soon wear off (as love does in unions of affection), and in the end, who knew but what she might become a happy wife, or, at all events, attain the average of married happiness? He was well convinced that he was acting for the best for all parties, including, of course, M. de Lernay. And were there not disadvantages in the arrangement for *him* also? Had he not been immolated for a week at the Grange at Casterton, whither he went in person, at the invitation of Mr. Meyrick, senior? Was it nothing to have breakfasted at half-past eight for six mornings running and to have gone to church on the seventh? Was it nothing to have endured two dinner-parties, during which the conversation was confined to field-sports and agricultural produce? Mr. Morrit had been the only civilized being he had met with in that melancholy exile, and even he was dull. He had been desolated, so it was said, by the undutiful conduct of his nephew. It was at Casterton that M. de Lernay learned for the first time the details of that matter, and identified in Mrs. Frederick Galton the sister of the man who had preserved his daughter from shame. He decided that Eugenie should, if possible, be kept in ignorance of this fact; any allusion to that dreadful adventure at Marseilles always gave her pain, and it was most foreign to his nature to give pain, if it could possibly be avoided. He was not for his part consumed with the desire of making himself known to the family of the late Mr. John Perling; but he had misgivings that his daughter might wish to do so, and it was one's duty to guard against an inconvenient enthusiasm. It was his very reticence in this matter, perhaps, that subsequently excited her suspicions, and led her to guess all, as we have seen, at the first mention of Mary Perling's name. For the rest, all had gone well. Squire Meyrick had proved willing to purchase not only a wife for his ne'er-do-well offspring, but even a noble father-in-law, and that at his own price.

"My money was all meant for my boy," said the old squire, with pathos; "and whether he gets it now, or after I am gone, is little matter."

"It cannot be better spent than on those who will keep him out of harm's way," responded the Frenchman, feelingly. "In me, my dear sir, you are insuring for your son a passport to good society; and every shilling which passes through my hands shall conduce to that end."

So both the village boys whom we first met on the Round at Casterton had married very young, yet neither was trusted with his own money.

Beyond all question, Frederick Galton had, for his part, been treated with great harshness in this respect. His own clandestine conduct had caused, it is true, the unfortunate disposition of his father's property; but it was in his uncle's power to have remedied that mistake, and he ought to have done so. There are many honorable men who are capable of acting with great injustice and cruelty when smarting under personal insult. The very uprightness of their own character helps to steel them, and they seem to themselves to be advocating the cause of virtue, in avenging their peculiar wrong. The curate did not know to what very serious straits he was reducing his nephew, by confining his income to within such narrow limits; but he had a shrewd suspicion that he was putting him to great inconvenience, and his conscience pricked him upon that account. He was obliged to fortify his mind by quotations against the prodigal, and by thoughts upon the necessity of the performance of painful duties. He was also, I fear, considerably strengthened in his determination by the reports which reached him of the language in which his nephew freely indulged when speaking of the Rev. Robert Morrit. Still his conscience pricked him. One day in particular, after the receipt of a letter from Mr. Jonathan Johnson, expostulating with him upon his harshness towards his once so beloved young relative, he was greatly moved.

"Do not deceive yourself," the editor had frankly written; "you are actuated in this matter by malicious feelings. Poverty is a bad school for one like Frederick Galton; if it sours him with the world you will have done a great injury to a fellow-creature, and even some, perhaps, to the world itself. I admire his talents more than ever; but how is it possible that they can have any lofty aim when it is necessary that they should purchase daily bread? You are answerable, Morrit, I repeat, for whatever happens; a shadowy menace, of course, to one who is a scoundrel, but one that should make a Christian gentleman consider a little."

Not a word had the crafty editor written concerning Mrs. Galton and the child; nothing to arouse the curate's prejudices, but everything to awaken his sense of justice. Mr. Morrit walked about his parish with his hands behind him all that day, revolving how he could give up an obstinate purpose without loss of dignity. And yet he was a kindly man by nature. It gave him genuine pleasure, for instance, that he was on that very occasion the messenger of a great piece of good news to a crippled veteran of the wars, who lived at the extremity of Casterton; a man of honor like himself, and who had also suffered like him in his domestic relations. He had had an only son transported for sheep-stealing years ago, and the disgrace had so wrought on him, that when any one touched upon the subject, ever so tenderly, he would tremble and grow pale, as the pain of no ancient but unhealed bodily wounds (of which he had several) could compel to do. Now the curate was the bearer of an epistle from this very son, now a free man in the underworld, enclosing a bank-note for fifty pounds. "Please, reverend sir, persuade my dear old father to accept it"—so the son had written—"for I dare not send it to him direct, lest he should tear it up, or burn it, without remembering that I am still his son, and privileged to love and serve him yet." It was a most affecting letter, and the curate pleaded the writer's cause with earnest eloquence. But the old man would not be convinced. He flattered himself that he was performing an act of virtue in resisting this appeal of his own flesh and blood to be allowed to do him service.

"No, sir," answered he; "you may send the money back—to the young man." (Here he gave a great gulp, endeavoring to swallow Nature herself, which is a tremendous feat before one gets used to it.) "Tell him I am glad that he is living a reformed life. and that he is sorry for what he has done. But, sir, I am an honest man myself; and I have enough, although it is but a little, to live upon. The country pays me what it owes me; there is no obligation there; and I had rather not be indebted to—to—" Here the old man broke down, and hid his face in his thin, brown fingers for a little.

"You are very proud and hard of heart," said the clergyman. "We should forgive and forget. Who are we, that we should punish our fellow-creatures, who have already paid the penalty for their offences? And besides, John, this is your own son."

"Ay," said the old man, "my own blood: the only child of his dear mother."

"Think of that, John, and forgive him: if I have ever done you a good deed, think upon it, and forgive him for my sake: nay, John, if God has been good to you—and you know how good he has been—do this for His sake, for it will be pleasing to Him."

It was pleasant to see the kind priest's eager face as he went about his Master's work, and pleaded His good cause.

"Well, look you, sir," returned the old man, "I scarcely know what it is right to do. You are the parson, and ought to know, that is true; but then talk is one thing, and fight is another, as we used to say in the army."

"I have no cant about me, I hope," rejoined the curate, quietly; "I have given you what I believe to be good advice."

"Doubtless, sir; but would you act upon it yourself? Now, here is your nephew, Mr. Frederick Galton, as nice a young gentleman as ever these eyes lit upon, who had always a kind word and an open hand to the poor. Many's the bit o' baccy I have had, thanks to Master Frederick; and now, because he's done wrong, and offended you, they do say you are very harsh to him, and keep him short in money matters. Of course I know nothing of the truth of this—it may be so, or it may not be so—but I ask you as a gentleman who wouldn't tell a lie, have *you* forgiven *him* yet? Come, tell me that."

"Really, John"—began Mr. Morrit, stammering.

"No, sir, that ain't the way, nor like yourself—asking your pardon, though we are alone now, and God alone sees us; so there can be no offence: what I want is a plain 'Yes' or 'No.' Have you forgiven him, or do you mean to forgive him, and to let him have what he wants? Because if you mean to keep upon the same terms as now, why, then, *I* can't be wrong in sending that fifty pounds back to that young man in Australia, with a message that I will have nothing whatever to do with him: whereas, if you are really going to make up with Master Frederick, and pardon the poor young man, who used to be so fond of his uncle, and never so happy as when he was—"

"John! John!" cried the curate, very hoarsely, "say no more: you are a good man, and I thank you for what you have spoken."

"Then I may take the fifty pounds, sir, from my poor boy?"

"Yes, you may, John; you may indeed. O my poor

Fred! my dear dead sister's son, why have we been estranged so long?" The rare tears stood once more in the curate's eyes, as they did in that of the pensioner. There was a double joy among the angels in Heaven over that simple scene, for the preacher had converted the disciple, and the disciple the preacher. It is the privilege of the angels to rejoice over *all* repentance; we mortals, alas! can only appreciate that which bears fruit *in time.* "Agree with thine adversary quickly while thou art in the way with him," says the Scripture; then how much more should we make peace with our own familiar friend—the wronger or the wronged, what matters?—while opportunity offers, and ere death or worse intervene, and close the golden gates of friendship between us, with unexpected, hideous jar!

CHAPTER XXXV.

POTTS PERE.

ADVERSITY does not always and at once chasten him upon whom it falls; the human soul is stubborn, and requires blow after blow to convince us of our own futility; just as the gambler receives heavy and continued losses, before he can make up his mind that luck is against him, and that he had better throw up the cards. Like a mountain stream which seethes and rages with every cross and fall, is the proud man growing poor; he may sink at last to some quiet level, out of sight and hearing, but in the meantime, the spectacle of his career does not make us in love with poverty. How many an elastic spirit has been broken by the long, long pressure of that iron hand! How many a genial nature has been soured, overflowed by the waters of bitterness! It is very well to be philosophic, and better still to have Christian resignation; but to the poor contumacious creature under Dame Poverty's discipline nothing seems so good as a five-pound note—save, of course, a note of higher value. It is wonderful how soon that situation which is euphoniously termed "somewhat reduced circumstances," will deteriorate, not only a man's nature, but his views of human life. He will not only place a Wall street value upon mere money, holding esteem and friendship, and sometimes even love, but as so much "greenbacks," but he leaps to the conclusion, that everybody else is equally knowing—he has been a fool hitherto all his life, it seems, and hoodwinked by society, but now at least he will let society know that he has found her out. This is in reality the chief cause why we drop our unprosperous friends. We omit them from our dinner-parties, not (unless we are very contemptible, indeed) because they can no longer invite us in return, but because their observations have become brusque and cynical.

Mr. Frederick Galton, at present of Somers Town, and late of a number of different places of residence, further and further removed from the fashionable neighborhoods, would unquestionably have been dropped by his numerous circle of friends, but for his exceeding cleverness. The genial charm of manner which was wont to draw so many within his influence, had fled, but it was replaced by a mocking wit. He made more enemies than friends wherever he went, but he was asked everywhere. He sparkled, and that was sufficient for those who invited him; but the source whence the light was drawn was no longer the native fire of youthful gayety; he had now a reputation for saying "wicked things," and had become a sudden convert—the youngest ever known—to the great Poohpooh School, to whom the whole world of men and women is as an apple of the Dead Sea shore. As a writer, he was improving fast in style and manner, and the income he derived from his pen improved also, although at a less satisfactory rate. Among literary men, he had a wide acquaintance, and was very welcome with them; they do not mind hard hitting; the free fight intellectual is popular among the Bohemians, and young Galton, late Mr. Jonathan Johnson's novice, neither asked nor gave quarter to his opponents. This sort of society is by no means inexorable to one of their body who has made an imprudent match; to marry, indeed, is a weakness in their eyes, but that feeling is evoked by the conventional nature of the institution, and its exceeding and oppressive respectability, and Frederick had not sinned in those directions. Mrs. Galton might have been the rage among a pleasant and powerful section of the community, had it pleased her so to be. Literary men—who have, by-the-by, the same objection to be designated by that title, as doctors have to be called medical men—are naturally simple and honest, notwithstanding their wild writing and wilder talk, and many of Frederick's friends fell honorably in love with his sweet wife. They swore that there was not a more genuine lady in all London, as there was not a more beautiful. Such of them as were artists (and many begin the battle of life armed with pencil as well as pen), were solicitous that she should give them sittings for their Madonnas, for the Virtues, and for the more decent of the Heathen goddesses. The adulation which they paid to her pleased her husband, but not herself. She shrank, almost alarmed, from it and from them. She did not understand their intellectual fireworks: the light way in which they sometimes spoke of solemn things seemed to her irreverent and shocking; when Frederick did so, she felt that somehow there was not the same wrong in that, for love and charity are one.

There are some women who seem most at their ease in male society, and not to need the companionship of their own sex; but with Mary it was quite otherwise. She would have given worlds to lay her head upon her mother's bosom for one twilight hour, and hear her loving voice, while she herself wept on unnoticed; or to listen to the thoughtful words of patient sister Jane. It was almost a relief to her when their circumstances grew so narrow that her husband discouraged all would-be visitors to their humble home; for though he had little personal pride, he did not choose that people should see his wife in a shabby gown. Then the baby had come for a blessed companion to her; and poverty and estrangement from her kith and kin, were more than compensated for by the intoxicating fact, that the child was indubitably like its father. The male parent modestly thought but little of this circumstance, and even rallied her upon it: "Why, my dearest love, I did not entertain the slightest apprehension that he would be like anybody else."

Frederick tore himself away without much difficulty from the society of that blessed babe. He was from home a great deal during both day and night. An apartment had been set aside for him at the office of the *Porcupine*, and there he wrote in the morning—composition at Somers Town being a work of difficulty, since there was but one sitting-room, and even that subject to sudden incursions of the maid-of-all-work, who, on the other hand, could be depended upon to keep away if one rang the bell. This desirable arrangement had, strange to say, been accomplished quite lately by Mr. Percival Potts. When John Meyrick, upon that gentleman's authority, had made his depreciating remarks upon the Galtons, he was not quoting a very recent piece of scandal, although when Frederick's marriage had first become know, his collaborateur had been exceedingly hard upon him. Lord Cuckoo's party had got into power, and with it Potts. The sub-editor's paper had become the ministerial organ. He was a greater man than ever, and of course, more impatient of contradiction. In his new position, he considered himself almost officially called upon to discountenance any social insubordination, such as an unequal marriage; and we may be sure that Fred-rick took less pains than ever to pay court to him. The literary club to which they belonged was transformed into a bear-garden whenever these two gentlemen happened to meet there, and Mr. Potts invariably came out of these conflicts second best. Prosperity had made him more overbearing, but not keener; while adversity had given a sting to the young man's wits, which made itself felt, notwithstanding the triple mail of self-complacency in which his foe was encased. A combat between a whale and a sword-fish can only end one way.

It was while this internecine war was raging between them that Mr. Frederick Galton happened to lose himself one morning, while essaying a short-cut from Somers Town into the civilized world. He got inextricably involved in a labyrinth of little streets all exactly like one another, and of which London contains whole towns. This particular town did not apparently boast of policemen, which was the more singular, since the contents of all the shops were emptied into the streets, and greatly exposed to larceny; so the young man stepped into a tailor's shop to ask the way. There were plenty of people standing at their doors on guard over their goods, of whom it would have been more convenient to inquire; but the tailor's shop had "Potts" written over it, and more than that, it had "P. Potts." This circumstance had a great attraction for Frederick, although not arising from the associations of love. The window of this establishment was not set forth after the skimpy manner of Bond Street, with one pair of elegantly-cut trousers and one elaborate waistcoat, but was crowded with articles of apparel, among which reclined (for there was something wrong with his knickerbockered legs) a waxen-boy, with a ticket round his neck such as blind men wear in charitable neighborhoods. This youth, however was perfectly wide awake (though he had six very distinct eyelashes upon each lid to shut, if he had been so disposed), and stared even to painfulness at those passers-by who could resist the attraction of "Youths' complete suits for the public schools at 1*l.* 4*s.* 6*d.*" Perhaps the semi-recumbent position was, after all, not owing to his legs so much as to the repeated disappointment of his expectations; for fashionable customers, having boys at a public school, and therefore requiring such distinguished garments, were far from numerous in that locality. The proprietor of this establishment, however, was a cheerful little old man, who, if he had had losses, had forgotten them. He was slightly humpbacked, and the professional attitude in which he sat behind his counter, aggravated the appearance of that defect considerably; a pair of scissors about the size of his own legs reposed by his side, and imparted to him a sort of pantomimic air.

"What can we do for *you*, sir?" inquired this gnome of industry, of Frederick, looking sharply up, his bright beady eyes in curious contrast with his snow-white hair. "Is it coats, or vests, or is it—which I should think most likely—connubial does?"

"I am afraid," said Frederick, smiling, "that you will think me a shabby fellow, since I have only entered your shop to ask the way."

"No," said the little tailor, regarding the young man attentively through his horn spectacles, "I shall not think you that; but unfortunately, I am the very last man you should have applied to by way of finger-post. I am but a poor creature, as you see, and seldom stir out of doors; but if you will reach down that little packet of books yonder, I think there is a map of London among them, which, although not a new one, may perhaps serve your purpose."

"Your literature is much more recent than your maps, however," observed Frederick. "Why, how is this? You have got the number of the *Porcupine* that only comes out to-day!"

"I have a friend connected with the—the establishment, who sends me a presentation copy every month," observed the little tailor, rubbing his hands. "I am a great admirer of the *Porcupine*. Don't you think, sir, that it is a very admirable magazine?"

"I do, indeed," said Frederick, frankly, "although, perhaps, I should not say so, since I am personally concerned with it. But, my good friend, you don't read it, you don't even cut the leaves."

The young author was seriously chagrined to find that his own article of the current month, as well as those of the two preceding numbers, remained uninvaded by the paper-knife.

"I read some of it," returned the old man, taking up a copy: "see here, how dog-leaved and dirty the pages are. I have cried over those beautiful words like a young child."

"The author of that paper is a very clever writer," remarked Frederick, dryly.

"The cleverest, the best of them all," replied the tailor, eagerly; "and he has got a kind heart, too."

"How do you know that, my good man?"

"Because I—I see it here," returned the old fellow: "under all the coldness and glitter, there lies affectionate warmth, just as the teeming earth lies warm beneath the frost and snow."

"I shall see the gentleman to-day whose works you think so highly of, and I will tell him what a warm admirer he has got in— Your name is Potts, is it not?"

"You will see him to-day!" cried the little old man, enthusiastically, and dashing his scissors together as though they were triumphant cymbals. "Dear me, dear me!" He looked at Frederick as schoolboys immured at Clapham on the Derby day gaze on the folks bound for Epsom Downs. He was not the Rose but he was about to be near the Rose. "Do you happen to be returning the same way, sir? Would you mind looking in and telling me how you found him, as you go by? Would you mind it very much?"

"I shall be very glad to do so," returned Frederick, looking fixedly at his new acquaintance. "I see that the initial of your Christian name is P. I cannot be far wrong in supposing that that stands for Percival. I am speaking to Percival Potts, father of the distinguished writer of that name, then?"

"And whoever told you that?" inquired the little tailor, setting down his shears in blank amazement and dismay.

"Why, you told me so yourself," laughed Frederick. "I assure you it is quite news to me;" and under his breath he added, "and very great news, too."

"Look here, sir," said the hunchback, solemnly, rising with difficulty, and holding on to the counter with both hands; "I am old, and you are young; I am weak, and you are strong; you could kill me very easily, but it would be a shameful thing to do."

"A very shameful thing," returned Frederick, quietly. "Who would dream of doing such a thing?"

"*You* would, sir; you are plotting it at this very minute; your young face that was beautiful as a picture when you came in here, is grown ugly and cruel. You are going to tell my proud son that you have found his father. You are jealous of his great fame and name. Why did I not know that you were his enemy at first sight?"

"Your son has done me much harm, old man," replied Frederick, sternly; "but what I hate him most for is because he is ashamed of you."

"Don't say that, sir; pray, pray don't say that," cried the old man, piteously. "You don't know what a good son he is. He stocks my shop, sir; all that is here has been given by him; it does not signify to me—thanks to my Percy!—whether customers come or not. He would have put me in a villa in the country, if I had only said the word. Once every week—think of that—he comes and takes his tea—there in that little room, and listens to my stupid talk; he as might be in the king's own palace, or where not; yet he never disappoints me—never. It isn't the shrimps and water-cresses as brings him, of course, but only me. Oh, sir, pray spare him, spare him!"

"I am glad to hear he comes and sees you," said Frederick, gravely.

"And *has* done, all his life," pursued the old man, eagerly; "when he was only errand-boy about the newspaper-office in the north country, and worked twelve hours a day, and needed to be in the Institute at night to train his mind, yet he always spared an hour to be with me. Why, he taught me to write and read, sir; he was my tutor—the teacher of his father—think of that—at twelve years old! Then, when he was reporter, with all his night work, it was the same; he was never too tired to tell me all the news; and when I got my bad fall—he was sub-editor then—he would sit by my bed-side and read until I forgot my pain, and sank to sleep."

"The better for him," said Frederick, solemnly, "both now and hereafter."

"And all that time, sir, and notwithstanding all these things, he was the perfect gentleman. 'Father, I intend to be a gentleman,' said he, looking up from his book one day, when he was but a child; and he has never faltered in his purpose. To see that boy pore over our few old books and records, in hopes to find out that he came of a good stock, was a wonderful sight; and when he had made it out to his own satisfaction that he did, I shall never forget it! Then he began to hate this tailoring trade; but I was wedded to it, and I couldn't do anything else. My poor dear wife, too, worked with her needle as well as any man; you are too young to know what a tie that is. It is ridiculous to you that an old misshapen tailor should speak of love. Ah, sir, you think my Percy proud; but his haughtiness is mere humility compared to the pride with which his mother regarded him. She would not have had him speak of her among the lords and ladies, look you, no, not for ten thousand pounds. It would have killed him, she well knew; the busy brain would have planned no more; the fiery wit would have been quenched forever. And now, if you wish to revenge yourself, young sir, for any slight which my son has put upon you, you can do so rarely; for you will not only kill your foe, but this poor worthless creature too, his father. He will not reproach me, although it was I who would have the name written up above my door, because, forsooth, I said I was an honest man, and need not be ashamed of it; but I shall know that it was my fault all the same; all mine, all mine!"

The old man sank down into his old position, and feebly strove to go on with his work, but could not do so; the mighty scissors were too heavy for him, and fell from his nerveless fingers; his head dropped forward on his knee in cross-legged dejection. It was a spectacle to move a harder heart than Frederick's. "Old man," said he, with feeling, "I had promised myself a great revenge upon your son."

"But you will spare him!" cried the tailor, looking up with eager hope; "your eyes are not cruel now."

"I will never breathe one word of what I know," replied Frederick, earnestly, "not even to himself; but when you see him next, tell him that Frederick Galton—You will not forget the name?—"

"No, no; go on."

"That Frederick Galton had him in his power this day, but spares him for your sake, his father's sake—not his. Do you understand? No; give no thanks to me, but let him give thanks to that good father—he will know how good when he is gone—whose trusting and unselfish love has disarmed my hate."

The young man reached his hand across the counter and took the tailor's feeble palm within his own. In another moment, he was away upon his road. They had met together for one half-hour upon life's pilgrimage, and were never to meet again in this world; yet what esteem had been won upon one side, what gratitude extorted from the other! What new and blessed belief in their fellow-creatures had been suddenly grafted, at least upon one of them! what charity! what generous forbearance!

Percival Potts was more intolerable than usual at the club that night—more despotic, more oppressive with quotation, more boastful of his ancient lineage, and of the knightly deeds of his ancestors in the grand old times; but his youthful foe never once laid lance in rest against him. He thought, with almost terror, of the idea that had once taken possession of him, of exposing this poor boaster in the midst of his wonderful lies! What a crime would he have therein committed, in ruining one who was never so poor but he could not help his parent, who was never so ignorant but he imparted to him what little he knew, who was never so occupied but he had time to attend to his wants in need and sickness. It is true that this man was contemptible enough from one point of view, even as a son. But, upon the whole, had poor Dr. Galton had as good reason to be proud of his offspring as had the little tailor in Wigwam street? Had Frederick never been ashamed (in Grosvenor Square, for instance), of one, not a relative, indeed, but who should have been nearer and dearer than all relatives? The young man, disarmed by thoughts like these, laid aside all his barbed talk. He was not conciliatory, because conciliation towards men of the Potts calibre is merely an invitation to them to be insulting; but he kept an unwonted silence. The toadies and flatterers whispered to one another: "He has knocked under. The comb of this young fighting-cock has been cut at last."

Upon the next meeting of the club, this opinion was expressed more openly, in the absence of its subject, by some unhappy slave, who, seeking to please the tyrant, received on his astonished ears a buffet which (intellectually) sent him sprawling.

"Be silent, sir; you are not fit to hold a candle to the man whom you revile."

And when the young gentleman himself entered the apartment, Percival Potts went forward to the door to meet him (as the Pope welcomes emperors of whose conduct he approves), and gave him a hand-grasp full of meaning.

"Let us be friends, Galton, henceforth," he whispered.

"But I am afraid I have not married a person of sufficiently distinguished family," rejoined Frederick, smiling.

"You need not trouble yourself on that account," answered the ready Potts. "I am charmed to hear that I am to meet you at the Meyricks', and only wish Mrs. Galton was to accompany you; her very looks would be a success, not only for a charade, but for a five-act play."

"I never *was* jealous of you," returned the young man, with a bold but pleasant smile.

"I do believe it, Galton," cried the sub-editor, frankly; "and I wish I could say the same of myself. But if I am not naturally magnanimous, I have at least the power of appreciating magnanimity in other people."

There is no necessity for many words in the bond which unites persons of genius; but if I have dwelt somewhat long upon the circumstance which gained Frederick Galton a powerful friend for life, it is because I see an ink-black cloud at hand, obscuring all the firmament of his being—a terrible time, when he will need friends indeed. The prescient author sympathises with the loved objects of his creation, and when he seems to procrastinate their good fortune, it is because he perceives the shadow of the coming woe draw nigh.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

VI ET ARMS A-KIMBO.

THE phrase "he hasn't a shilling," has a very variable meaning, and the value of that coin is as difficult to define as what is a pound. When applied to a lucifer-match seller in the public streets, it means twelve pence; and when used in reference to the younger son of a duke, it rises to five thousand pounds. Thus, although it was currently reported that Mr. Frederick Galton had not a shilling "to call his own," "to bless himself with," "to swear by," etc., etc. (for there is no end to the phrases with which even the most prosaic delight to honor their idol Mammon), he had always in reality his pockets full of money. Nothing (he used to aver) was so distressing to him as to be without a few sovereigns in his waistcoat; not necessarily to spend, but to be ready to spend in case of an emergency. "Everything that is beautiful to the eye, or pleasant to the taste, is mine," quoth he, "in the highest and best sense, if I can but command the price of it. The capability of possession is equal to the possession itself, and, at all events, nips envy in the bud. Directly I feel that evil passion rise, I say to myself: 'Frederick, Frederick, if this is not put a stop to at once, I go in and purchase that expensive article.'" Perhaps he was sometimes compelled by this inexorable logic to commit little extravagances; but certain it is, in spite of his assertion, that he never spent anything, that the golden lining of his waistcoat pockets had not seldom to be renewed. This could only be done by omitting to pay for vulgar necessaries, which every day appeared to him a duty less and less incumbent; for getting into debt is like going to sea, when you are once there, it matters very little whether you ride in ten-fathom water or a hundred; and the longer you keep afloat, the more accustomed you get to the danger.

I am afraid he was very much encouraged in this personal extravagance—for such it was in a man of his position—by his wife. Mary thought nothing too good, or good enough, for her paragon of a husband; she did not know the full extent of his embarrassments, but she knew that it became her to practise every kind of domestic economy. When he went out to his fine dinners, to which she was not invited, he would often lay strict injunctions upon her to treat herself to some delicacy for her lonely meal, and she would appear to comply with his wishes, really thankful for the loving thought that dictated them; but it always ended in bread and cheese. That was the sort of supper which she had been used to all her life, and why should she object to it now? But her Frederick had been brought up in a very different manner, and it was only right that he should deny himself nothing.

"Go and enjoy yourself, my own love, by all means," was her cheerful reply, whenever his conscience pricked him into self-reprobation for leaving her so much at home and alone. She did not use that phrase in any sarcastic sense, as some wives do, and even added: "I never feel so happy, Frederick, as when I think that you are so, and that I am no impediment to your pleasure." Nor let it be imagined that the lord of this patient Griselda was a selfish and unfeeling fellow, who never thought of his wife when he was away from her, and took all her self-abnegations for his sake as a matter of course. He was merely such a husband as any man, however loyal and affectionate-hearted, is likely to become, who marries a woman who has adored, and continues to adore him; a class of domestic female, however, not so common as to arouse apprehension of any very wide-spread deterioration of the male sex.

But when the door of that little residence in Somers Town had closed behind its temporary proprietor (for they were only in lodgings) for the whole day (unless when he returned late in the afternoon to dress for dinner, and then went forth again in glorious apparel for the entire evening and far into the night), poor Mary Galton experienced a sense of desolation to which she never owned. If her husband could have looked into her heart as she bade him smiling farewell every morning, he would have turned back in bitter penitence, and called himself a multitude of derogatory names; but he only saw the beautiful face with the sunshine on it,—for how could she do otherwise than smile while he was in sight?—and knew nothing of the shadow that fell over it a moment afterwards. She and her child were henceforth left, not only among strangers, but enemies. Every ring at the door-bell was a hostile summons. The butcher, the grocer, and the baker attacked the house every morning by regular approaches, and even threatened to cut off the supplies of the little garrison. A guerilla warfare was ceaselessly carried on by the milkman and the washerwoman. Besides these, there was an enemy within-doors, more terrible than any, in Mrs. Gideon, the landlady. She was full of strange expressions, "Gad-a-mercy!" "Odds my life!" etc., etc., sounding to poor Mary like oaths; and she protested, in a vehement manner, that she had waited long enough, and that she should like to see the color of Mrs. Galton's money most uncommonly. It was poor Mary's task, thus subject to "perpetual alarms and excursions," from within and without, not, indeed, to repulse the invaders, for that was impossible, but to stave them off until that good time which her husband assured her was approaching, and above all things to keep him as ignorant as possible of their excessive importunity. He took anything unpleasant so very much to heart that all bad news must be kept from him; annoyances such as these would worry him to death; and it was best, since he could not cure them, that he should know nothing about them. Of course it was a mistaken policy, but nobody could have carried it out with more success. Even the butcher was melted by the beauty of this sweet spoken debtor, who came out with her lovely child in her arms to beg that the bill might be allowed to run a little longer. The more obdurate creditors were those of her own sex, and of these the worst was Mrs. Gideon. She was naturally coarse and even cruel, and poor Mrs. Galton was very much afraid of her indeed. Why she did not attack Frederick himself I cannot tell; perhaps her savage breast was moved by his good looks, as that of the butcher was moved by Mary's; perhaps she was a coward in spite of her loud tones and arms a-kimbo; but at all events, certain it is that her fiercest onslaughts upon her present lodgers were made in the absence of the principal offender.

It was getting late on an afternoon in June, and Mrs. Galton having returned fatigued from a dusty walk with her nurse and son-and-heir, was helping to put the latter to bed, when there came a rap at the nursery door, and enter Mrs. Gideon, with a pottle of strawberries in her hand, and a determination of blood to her head, from a combination of three causes—rum, running up-stairs, and passion. "A pretty thing," cried she, "Gad-a-mercy, not to have paid me a silver sixpence these two months, and then to order strawberries at eighteenpence a pottle, and my fool of a servant to pay the money, which she might just as well have thrown into the dirt. Strawberries, bedad!"

Poor Mary clutched her half-dressed child to her bosom, in case instant flight should be necessary, and addressed the fury in mitigation.

"I know nothing about them, Mrs. Gideon, and certainly have ordered nothing of the kind myself. I will pay you, however, the eighteenpence with pleasure. I daresay my kind husband told them to send them in for me at tea-time, and purposely did not pay for them, that they might be sure to be sent."

"Your *kind* husband!" rejoined the landlady, with contemptuous pity. "Ah, he's very kind, no doubt, and especially with other people's money. Why you poor little fool, haven't you seen through *him* yet, and you his wife? Why, when you came here, first, says I to myself, 'He can surely never have made her an honest woman, or she would never put up with such treatment.'"

"Mrs. Gideon," answered Mary, pale as ashes, but trembling much more with anger than with fear, "I do not know what to say to one like you, except that you are not telling the truth."

"Hoity-toity, one like me," quoth the landlady, with a scornful laugh; "and who are you, then, Wheyface? There must be *something* wrong about you, or else your man wouldn't leave you every day, and all day long in this fashion. Why, how do I know but what he may go away some fine morning, and never come back at all, but leave you and your squalling baby by way of payment for the rent?"

"When he comes back to-night, woman," returned Mary, quietly, "it will be for the last time to this house; I am quite sure of that. He will never"—here her voice sank into a sort of pitiful soliloquy—"never leave me under this roof alone again."

"But you will go from here to jail," continued the virago, stamping upon the floor with passion. "If I can get my dues no other way, I will get it out of your skin. There are men in the house now who will see me righted. I swore I would do it, and I have done it. Your young gentleman will find a guest in the parlor whom he has not invited."

The little nursery, with its diabolical figure in the foreground—space-monopolizing, terrible as the helmet in the Castle of Otranto—swam round before Mary's eyes. Her little maid, her only ally, had fled in panic. She did not know that much of the threatened evil was mere malicious menace; while she felt that the woman herself would not hesitate to push a cruel law as far as it would go. Already she beheld her husband hauled to prison—her husband, against whom a few minutes ago she had thought it sacrilege even to hear this woman speak. Her child was moaning at her breast, as though to remind her that he, too, was about to be whelmed in the coming ruin. "My God!" cried she, in agony, moving the thick masses of hair from her forehead, and trying to think, "how *can* I—*can* I save him?"

"By paying the money!" answered the landlady, with abrupt intelligence, the bare idea of such a satisfactory arrangement giving distinctness to her speech and steadiness to her erratic eyes. "30*l*. 14*s*. 4½*d*., much of which has gone out of my own pocket. You ain't got it, you as eats strawberries at 1*s*. 6*d*. the pottle—no, not you; nor your husband neither, for all his fine feathers—of which I'll pluck him this very night, mind you, or else my name ain't Sarah Gideon. Here's the bill, ma'am, which I leave upon this table; perhaps you would like to examine the items."

"Receipt it!" observed a clear sweet voice, falling on the ear like a nightingale after screech-owl.

A lady splendidly attired, but with a thick veil falling from her bonnet, and almost entirely concealing her features, was standing within the room; her speech was directed to the landlady, but her eyes were earnestly fixed upon the face of the young wife. "There are pen and ink, woman, and here is the money. Sign!"

"Which I am humbly thankful for, mem," said Mrs. Gideon, courtesying, after a rather elaborate examination of the watermarks of the bank-notes; "and if I have been somewhat hasty in my language, having been worrited with spasms all the day (as I hope may never be the case with either of you ladies), and gin and peppermint next to useless, perhaps it may be forgotten and forgiven.—May I help you to take your bonnet and shawl off, my pretty gentlewoman?" Mrs. Gideon was about to suit the action to the word, but the stranger drew herself up with contemptuous dignity, and once more pointed to the table.

"Sign and be silent! That will do."

The termagant was endeavoring to frame some false and fawning words to address to her late victim, who had sunk down in a half-swoon into a chair, but the new-comer motioned her away. "Have you not done enough mischief by your talk already, woman?" said she, sternly. "Mrs. Frederick Galton is not accustomed to deal with drunken folks. *I am.* Now leave the room."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

EAVES-DROPPING.

RELIEVED from immediate terror of Mrs. Gideon, which had frozen the very fountain of life within her, Mary regarded her unknown preserver through a mist of tears. "I cannot help crying a little," said she, humbly; "but I do feel so very grateful. Heaven bless you! See, my child blesses you, for to me at least his smile is a blessing."

"Weep on, kind heart," returned the stranger, putting aside her veil, and regarding the young mother with affectionate yearning. "It is well to have eyes that have not forgotten how to weep."

"That surely cannot be your case," answered the other, earnestly. "It is not possible that one so young, and fair, and rich in this world's goods, can be in such sad plight as that."

"It is very possible," replied the visitor, with a sorrowful smile; "but I am not come here to talk about myself, Mary."

"Mary! Why, how is it you know my name? I never saw you in all my life before; of that I am sure; since, having seen you, no one could have forgotten you."

The undisguised admiration in the young wife's countenance was suddenly exchanged for a look of embarrassment.

"I know now," added she, with a slight color mounting to her cheeks; "you must be Eugenie de Lernay."

"I did bear that name once, but I am married now." Mrs. John Meyrick could not repress a sigh as she said these words. Mrs. Frederick Galton sighed too when she heard them, but it was a sigh of relief. Eugenie interpreted it as clearly as though the other had said: "I am glad you are a married woman: it is bad enough that you should have come here to help my Frederick, as it is; but if you had been single, the thing would have been intolerable." She would far rather have been in the power of Mrs. Gideon than indebted to this young beauty.

"Mary, dear, listen to me," continued she, gravely. "I like and admire your husband, as all must do who know him, but it is not on his account that I am come here to-day. I am come to visit Mary Perling, the sister of a man whose name has been in my prayers night and day for years—a dead man, but one who will never die out of my heart."

"Did you love Charles?" inquired Mary, with wondering eyes. "You must have been very, very young."

"I love him, but I never saw him," returned Eugenie. "It is a long, sad story, and I have no time to tell it now; but, Mary, when I tell you that he saved my sister—gone to heaven long since—from shame, you will not wonder that I am here, having heard by happy chance of your need; that I fall on my knees before you thus, and kiss you with no Judas lips, but because I love you dearly, and take your baby in my childless arms, and pray that I may yet, though late, be some little help and comfort to him and to you."

She took the child, still smiling in her face, and caressed it tenderly; and as the mother watched her, the lingering shades of doubt dissolved and faded from her pure white brow.

"How good it is of you to have come here, Eugenie—I may call you Eugenie, may I not? What a kind face you have—yet somehow, I used to think you cold and haughty. You cannot be very proud to have come here, and to *me*."

"*Proud!*" returned the other, bitterly. "If I be so, being what I am, then must I be proud indeed. It is only very lately that I learned who you were; and since then— Look you, Mary dear, I am a very wretched woman. I have no husband to love, as you have. I am married to a sot, and worse (that is why I look so hard), in whom the demon of drunkenness has been exorcised of late only to make room for the fiend of jealousy. I am watched, and tracked, and suspected—though I do not even know of what—and therefore it was not easy to get to see you. But I am so glad that I *have* seen you at last; we two will be firm friends. Hush! what was that?" Mrs. John Meyrick turned deadly pale and trembled.

"That is Frederick!" cried Mary, joyfully; "I know the sound of his latchkey. Let us go down-stairs: how glad he will be to see you! But, Eugenie, do not say a word about that dreadful scene with Mrs. Gideon. It would annoy him beyond measure; I will only tell him how kind you have been in lending us—"

"Not a word, not a syllable about that, Mary. That is between you and me only. When you become very rich, and calculating, and unkind, you shall pay me, if you please. If you feel distressed at owing me a few pounds, what ought I to feel, who have never even acknowledged my great debt to your dead brother!"

Mary returned the prettiest answer in all the feminine vocabulary—a kiss.

"Why, Eugenie, how cold your lips are! I am afraid that woman frightened you, although you did behave so bravely. Lay the child down in the cot, and let me bring you a glass of water. I can get it fresh from the tap in Frederick's dressing-room, and be back in an instant."

She was not away much longer, but in the interim the little mirror hanging by a nail on the wall reflected a charming face with a rose-flush on either cheek. There was no danger of Eugenie "looking a fright," but every woman likes to be certified that there is nothing amiss with her hair before presenting herself to anybody, except, perhaps, her lawful husband; nor do I believe that the Pig-faced Lady herself was ever left alone with a looking-glass without taking advantage of the opportunity.

Of course, there is such a thing as Platonic love, but there is always a certain embarrassment upon at least one side, when a young gentleman and a young lady who have made themselves mutually agreeable while single, meet for the first time after their marriage to "another." If they have both married, this embarrassment is shared by each, and yet by no means diminished. The female, however, is always most at ease, and generally manages to possess herself of what vantage-ground the situation affords. Eugenie descended to the sitting-room with the heir of the house of Galton in her arms, put in, as it were, in evidence of her new position as friend of Frederick's wife. Poor Frederick wished himself for the moment the father of twins, in order that he might at least establish his claim, by means of No. 2, to the status of a family man. He had not seen Mrs. Meyrick since that interview at Camford, in which her intended had made them both so uncomfortable by his clownish wrath. He knew, although Mary had never breathed a word of it, that his own wife was not without a tinge of jealousy of the fair Eugenie; so well was he aware of this, that he had not thought it judicious to communicate the fact, that he was going out to the Meyricks' the very next evening to take his part in acting charades. It is lawful to tell everything to one's own wife, but it is sometimes not expedient. The invitation had come from M. de Lernay, whom he did not like, and was dated from the house of a man whom he intensely despised; his acceptance must therefore have been given in the hope of meeting somebody else than they; and now he had unexpectedly met that person beforehand.

Frederick and Eugenie shook hands warmly.

"You are very cruel, Mr. Galton, to have hidden your charming wife away from me thus long. I have taken upon myself to make the first call, and that must be returned, if you please. I do not ask her to accompany you to our house to-morrow evening, because it will be an entertainment unsuited, if I guess right, to her taste. It is one, at least, which, if I could, I myself would willingly avoid."

"I have been asked by Monsieur de Lernay to take part in a scene from Shakspeare," exclaimed Frederick, a little awkwardly. "It is a most innocent *rôle,* my dear Mary, I do assure you; I am going to be Portia in the 'Merchant of Venice.'"

"I should dearly like to see you act him," said Mary, innocently.

"It's not a 'him' at all, my love," observed Frederick, twining his fingers in one of Mary's golden locks. His tone was as loving as his action, but both the women knew that he was much annoyed at the mistake.

"No lady can be got to play the part," remarked Eugenie, hastily; "a London drawing-room audience is so censorious. It was so very kind of your husband to undertake it."

These well-meant platitudes failed, as usual, in the intention of putting at their ease those to whom they were addressed. Mary hung her head, ashamed of having given her husband cause to be ashamed of her. Frederick was ashamed of himself because he had blushed even for an instant for his own wife in the presence of

Eugenie. "Surely," whispered his conscience, "such love as hers might have excused the want of learning." These three persons were in a position the reverse of that occupied by the man in the fable in charge of the fox, the goose, and the measure of corn. Any two of them would have been charming company, and would have done one another no harm; but the three together had nothing to say for themselves whatever. It would have been felt a relief by all when the clock on the stairs struck six, and Eugenie rose hastily to depart, had it not been for the apprehension expressed in her countenance. Cinderella, when she overstayed her hour at the king's ball, could not have looked more scared.

"I had no idea it was so late," exclaimed she. "Is there a cab-stand near, Mr. Galton? Would you kindly let somebody show me where it is? I should lose time by sending for a vehicle; and I have not one moment to spare."

"I will go with you myself, Mrs. Meyrick, if you must really leave us so soon. We shall not find a cab very near at hand, I fear."

The two young women hurriedly embraced one another. "Dearest Mary," whispered Eugenie, "please believe that you are henceforth my sister."

The next moment she was gone. It was raining heavily when she and Frederick Galton stepped into the little street, and there was at that time no other passenger, from end to end of it, save themselves. He had scarcely, however, put his umbrella up, and taken her arm, when the swing-door of a public-house at the corner slowly opened, and an evil face looked after them cunningly. It must have been watching through some cranny beforehand, or it could scarcely have so nicked the time. It was just such a face as may be seen at the door of any gin-shop—its custom always of an afternoon to *be* there—but the figure and dress were scarcely consonant with it. Drunkenness had as yet made no inroads on this individual's purse, or at least his credit, for he was attired very handsomely; and if he had pawned his undercoat, an excellent surtout, at all events, concealed its absence, as it also hid the greater part of his person. The high collar was turned upwards so that, if he had not protruded his red nose and lobster eyes, as he did in his malign curiosity, his best friend (if he had one) would scarcely have been able to recognize him. His hat, too, was not a drunkard's hat, by any means, but a recent acquisition from Lincoln and Bennett's, such as most people would keep under cover until such a shower as that which was now flushing Somers Town was overpast. This gentleman, however, merely tilted that article of property over his eyes to hide his fiery face still more completely, and stepped swiftly after the two receding figures. The rain so pelted down upon pavement and gutter, that Frederick and Eugenie did not hear his footsteps even when he drew close behind them, but went on with their talk, arm in arm, with their faces very close together, as must needs happen when two individuals wish to converse in storm-time under a limited umbrella. Although they had had such a start of the eaves-dropper, it was already difficult for him to pick up the thread of their discourse, interrupted, moreover, as it was by the same cause which enabled himself to remain so near without discovery.

"Shall I tell you why I came here, Mr. Galton?" Mrs. Meyrick was saying. "It must have seemed a very strange thing to do."

"It is quite unnecessary to speak of it, Eugenie; I have known all that you would tell me, long, long ago. Generous—" Here the listener slipping upon a loose stone in the pavement, received a douche-bath from below, and was thrown out by the interruption for the next twenty words; and twenty words left out in a conversation to which we do not possess the key, makes the scent rather cold. How was this too curious wretch to know that the last subject had been dropped very suddenly and the topic of old Dr. Hermann promptly introduced by Frederick to supply the hiatus?

"Dear, kind man!" returned Mrs. Meyrick. "That was a very, very happy time."

If the fellow who was thus dogging the unconscious pair, had in reality received that "facer" which his baseness so richly deserved, it could scarcely have staggered him more than did those few words. He started back, and glared upon the speaker, as she slowly increased her distance from him, like one who has caught it "well from the shoulder." He had not an intelligent countenance, but a countenance does not require much intelligence to express concentrated hate.

"Dear kind devil!" muttered he, through his clenched teeth. "And I have thought sometimes I was pretending to be jealous only to frighten her. It was well I tracked her here." A cab dashed up to him, and its driver, attired in some shining waterproof garment, cried: "All right, jump in, sir."

The young man answered him with a curse, and began to walk hurriedly on.

"Why, you scaly warmint," said the cabman, keeping beside him at a trot, "what d'yer mean, then, by hailing this here vehicle with your stupid arm working about like a mad semaphore? You should wear a straight-jacket, *you* should, leastways unless you've got plenty of sixpences to pay for calling people off the rank. Darn ye, but you *shall* pay!" Here he drove off at a gallop, catching sudden sight of the pair in advance, and rightly judging that any two in the bush—his possible fares—were greatly preferable to the ill-conditioned bird at present in hand. The latter, perceiving his purpose, stood still, and watched Frederick place Eugenie in the vehicle; watched him close the umbrella, as though he would have entered after her; watched her shake her head and smile; watched her gloved hand thrust forth from the window, taken into Frederick's palm, and raised to his lips.

"I shall see you to-morrow; be sure you come," were the last words spoken at the farewell. Eugenie raised her voice so as to drown the noise of the wheels, and they reached not only Frederick Galton's, for whom they were intended, but the ears of her husband, John Meyrick, also.

"To-morrow, you jade," hissed he, as he turned upon his heel, and hastily retraced his steps; "something may happen then which is not in your programme. If, instead of that Shylock trash, we could have that scene I saw at the play the other night, where the black man strangles his wife! Damn me, but I would act it to the life, and stop your cooing for good and all."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE DRAWING-ROOM AND SECOND FLOOR.

THERE is an offensive story, often quoted against private theatricals, which relates that a great professional actor having been indiscreetly asked his opinion regarding the merits of a certain amateur performance, and having in vain declined to give it, delivered himself thus: "You ask me, Mr. Stage-manager, which of your admirable company I like best; well, without being invidious, I must say I prefer your prompter."

"Dear me, sir, why the prompter?"

"*Because I have seen least of him, and heard most of him.*"

This is bitter satire, but private theatricals have managed to survive it. The fact is, that the sarcasm is founded upon the mistaken notion, that it is the audience which our amateur company desire to please; whereas their primary, if not their sole intention is to please themselves. The one or two nights in which they give their final representation, are indeed devoted to the former object. But the real charm in the undertaking lies in the details of "production;" in the mistakes at rehearsals, in the going to school again with charming young women for our teachers, and in the Bohemian and unconventional manner in which an acting company must needs live together. There is no pleasanter way of passing a few weeks' holidays than as one of a *corps dramatique* which has been gathered together in some country-house to entertain the "county" at the month's end, and in the meantime to entertain one another. The very makeshifts and contrivances which it is necessary to employ in our improvised Theatre-royal, afford intense amusement; so does the stage love-making, so often prolonged beyond the dramatic season; the being husband, lover, uncle, and all sorts of relations, to persons of the other sex whom we have never before set eyes on in our lives; the impossibility of remembering some ridiculous speech out of the farce at the right moment, and the certainty of its recurring with extreme importunity at the most untimely seasons, such as during that choral service which the Tractarian rector has instituted in the village church; the application of gold-leaf to the elaborate playbills—one of the most charming occupations in which male and female labor ever combined; and the having one's eyebrows corked and one's moustaches adjusted by a lovely female standing on tiptoe, and regarding, head aside, the effect of her artist touches. All this is delightful, but the bliss is peculiar to the country; in town, I humbly submit that private theatricals are a mistake. The Londoners seem to be aware of this, and rarely hazard comparisons, in their own private houses, with the performances at the theatres. They confine themselves to charades (a hateful institution), or tableaux, or detached scenes; these last being generally determined upon in order to bring out some gentleman who has peculiar views as to the delineation of a character like that of Hamlet, and who intends to cause Fechter to be forgotten.

If M. de Lernay had any views respecting the impersonation of Shylock, they were undoubtedly peculiar;

but, to do him justice, he had none at all. His proposal to take to the part was but the whim of the moment, and would not have been carried out but for the opposition which it met with, and which piqued him. If he had seriously considered the question of asking Frederick Galton to Park Lane, he would probably have dismissed it as an inconvenient, if not a dangerous step. But the suggestion, fallen from him without reflection, had been received with such extreme disfavor that the old despot made up his mind to carry his point at all hazards. It would never do, reasoned he, to let John Meyrick reassert himself as master of his own house. The Frenchman, indeed, considered his own position with respect to this good-for-nought as very similar to that of a horse-breaker with a vicious and powerful steed; he must not suffer such a hard-mouthed runaway to get his head again even for once. I do not say that this course was not a very proper one in respect to Mr. John Meyrick, had he been alone concerned in the matter; but M. de Lernay, intoxicated with power, and rejoicing in the exercise of it to the uttermost, forgot that his victim was also his son-in-law. What Eugenie suffered while her father thus reigned supreme, none will ever know till that great Day of Revelation, in which the blackest page of human wickedness will perhaps be found among the stainless records of married life.

Since it had thus been decided that the long interrupted acquaintance with Frederick Galton was to be renewed, the ever-smouldering embers of jealousy in John Meyrick's heart had burst into lurid flame. If he had not given up drink, as Eugenie had hinted, for the more complete reception of this passion, drink at least had failed to quench it. He had watched, and spied, and tracked his unhappy wife, until at last the wicked fool had heard, as he imagined, with his own ears, the truth of his suspicions. He had no idea of the real reason which had taken his wife to Somers Town; he had marked her furtively leave her home, and followed her to the cab-stand from which she had been driven to Frederick's house; she little knew that her husband was never more than thirty yards behind the vehicle during that long drive. He had stopped his own cab short of the door, and concealing himself, as has been described, in a congenial hiding-place, had met the fate of most eaves-droppers, in making himself miserable upon grounds misunderstood as well as insufficient. Wretched and furious, he had betaken himself to his old weakness —brandy; whether as a means of temporary forgetfulness, or in order to nerve himself for some terrible revenge, it matters not. At all events, he had overdone the dose, and been brought home early on the morning of the theatricals in a state of hopeless stupefaction. His valet had put him to bed in his dressing-room (as he had often done before) with the remark, that he had never knowed master "cut so deep;" and there he lay all through the ensuing day. The fashionable world, which demands so much, does not require that the giver of any entertainment should himself be present, so long as there is a sufficiency of things more needful; and they listened to the mournful intelligence that Mr. Meyrick was too indisposed to dispense his own hospitality with the most philosophic equanimity. The reception-rooms rang no less with polite laughter, nor did the drawing-room audience withhold their applause at the Shakspearian representation.

M. de Lernay had "made up" for Shylock to admiration; no detective, however skilled in unmasking the human face divine, could have recognized the features of the airy Frenchman beneath his borrowed beard and brows. So charmed was he himself with the impersonation, that he maintained his disguise throughout the evening, when dancing had long been substituted for the drama, and the other performers did the like. I don't think Mr. Jonathan Johnson quite approved of masquerading to this extent, but he was never suffered to conclude his sentence of objection, beginning with "What's the goo—goo—good—"

"'I'll not answer that,'"

quoted M. de Lernay, with Judaic accent;

"'But say it is my humor . . . .
Yet can I give no reason, nor I will not.'"

Mr. Percival Potts, on the other hand, was not displeased to strut, an hour or two longer, upon the social stage, as Duke of Venice.

As for Portia, the universal female voice decreed that Frederick should remain the lady-lawyer he had played so faultlessly, and that without rehearsal.

"'You press me far, and therefore I will yield,'"

he had answered, gallantly, in Shakspeare's words, and kept his wig and gown on. This personation of the assumed characters was a good idea, for it did away with that stiff-backed monotony which is the curse of our social entertainments, and which led one of our modern statesmen to sigh forth: "Ah, what a happy thing would life be but for its amusements, and especially if there were no such thing as a 'little music' in the world!" It was altogether a very pleasant party, and a decided success. The ordinary guests did not leave until day had dawned; and those who had taken part in the performance until much later. M. de Lernay, who had played the host with uncommon grace, would not hear of their earlier separation: "I have scarcely touched a bit of supper all night," said he; "if I am not to have my pound of flesh, at least let me have some chicken salad, and pay me the compliment of sitting down with me—your Grace the Duke, Antonio, and the rest, come, a parting glass of champagne, an' you love me."

Quite a different sort of scene from this was enacting up-stairs. The real host had come to his senses early in the evening, and had risen and dressed himself. When all was done, he caught sight of himself in the cheval glass, and then turned it to the wall. There was something in his own face that terrified him, and being afraid that others would see it, he did not venture down-stairs. The noise of music and laughter came up to him in gusts as the doors below happened to be opened, and his countenance grew harder and harder as he listened. "He would change all that presently—yes, by Heaven, he would—and with a vengeance." Would he? A dampness settled on his brow. He was dwelling upon some image of horror conjured up in his own mind. With shaking fingers he unlocked a little cabinet that stood by the bedside; it was a bijou of a cabinet, intended to hold some of the elegancies of the toilet, but what it did hold was a bottle of brandy and a wineglass. He helped himself once—twice. "Curse the people, would they never go?" The early dawn poured into the room, showing everything with painful distinctness, for, since he had been put to bed in the daytime, the shutters had not been closed. The carriages which had been conveying away the guests unceasingly for some time grew few and far between. The last had surely driven away by this time. He raised the window, and looked out: no, there was one carriage waiting still, the brougham which Mr. Percival Potts had set upon the strength of his connection with the ministry. "Well, he would perhaps have something to put in the second edition of his paper that evening." The aroma of tobacco was wafted upward from beneath the porch. Two young men stepped forth, one of whom Meyrick recognized as an old college acquaintance.

"Let me take a light from your cigar," observed the other, who was a stranger, and they stopped under the window. "What a jolly—puff, puff—evening we've had. I'm deuced glad I went, much obliged to you for taking me. What a stunner that Mrs. Meyrick is! Which was her husband?"

"He was not there at all," answered the man known to Meyrick; "they said he was ill. I believe he is killing himself with brandy, and, between ourselves, a good job too."

"Then she'll marry again, I'll bet; and I shouldn't wonder if the man would be that fellow who played Portia—Galton, I think they called him—what's that? I thought I heard somebody swearing."

John Meyrick drew in his head, and crouching down beneath the window-sill, like a wild beast in its covert, heard their footsteps die away. Then he opened a door which communicated with his wife's bed-room, and looked in with wolfish eyes.

It was a chamber fitted up with the utmost luxury, and, but for the presence of the bed, might have been a drawing-room. Even the bed was a thing of beauty fit for rarest dreams; the coverlet of satin, and the pillows —"the widowed marriage pillows"—trimmed with exquisite lace. John Meyrick took one of these up in his hands and poised it; but presently laying it in its place again, climbed up on a velvet chair, and took down a bell-pull from its gilded hinge. It was a rope of twisted silk, slender, but very strong. In this he made a running noose, and took it with him into his own room.

As he passed by Eugenie's dressing-table, a letter stuck in the embroidered pincushion caught his eye; the contents of it were of no great importance, and were known to him; but he read them over again, and his features relaxed a little—just a very little—as he did so. The handwriting was that of Mrs. Meyrick, senior. "Without mutual concessions, my dear Eugenie," she wrote, "married life can never be happy." "My poor boy has a good heart; etc., etc." Such efforts at mediation were about as useful as sticking-plaster for healing the leak of a seventy-four; but the attempt exhibited in every line the undying love of the mother for her son.

John Meyrick placed the rope under his pillow, and again went out to the head of the stairs. All was quiet now, save that an airy bubble of laughter escaped ever and anon from the dining-room, where M. de Lernay and his friends were having their rere-supper. The watcher took off his shoes, and noiselessly descended to the drawing-room; the waxen lights in the brackets and chandeliers were fighting with the dawn that streamed in through many a cranny of the gilded shutters; but the brilliant company had all departed, nor was there anybody in the boudoir adjoining, where half-a-dozen flirtations had been proceeding so agreeably an hour before. The many mirrors reflected but one stealthy form, and a face ghastly pale, with the mouth worked into an evil smile. Did an echo of the cooing talk which had so lately been held there still linger about the *fauteuils* and conversation-chairs, or was that a real voice which struck his ear? It was a real voice, and his wife's! She was talking to somebody in the conservatory beyond. He stole on to the window-mirror, and glued his white face to the glass. Yes, it was Eugenie. The sickly light of the Chinese lanterns that swung above was quenched in the full effulgence of the morning, which streamed upon her from an open window. Not half-a-dozen young women in all London would have dared to welcome Phœbus thus after a whole night's revel; but if she had just risen from her couch after refreshing sleep, or newly come, like Aphrodite, from the enamoured wave, she could not have looked more fresh and fair.

By her side was a young man in a strange dress and wig, but Meyrick recognized him at once—his foe and rival, Frederick Galton.

She was gathering a bouquet for him to take home to Mary in flowerless Somers Town.

"Stay, do not rob your greenhouse," returned Frederick; "let me have those in your own bouquet-holder."

"'Do not draw back your hand; I'll take no more.
And you in love shall not deny me this.'"

"But these are fading," returned she.

"What matter for that? Their chief value will, I am sure, be held to be that you carried them all night."

"Then take the bouquet-holder, too," said she, "and with it my kindest love.—And now I must wish good-night to my father, and then—"

The spy had but just time to reach the drawing-room door, ere that of the boudoir opened. He flew up-stairs with stockinged feet, and leaped into the bed he had lately quitted, and drew the clothes up to his ears; and there he lay, touching the silken rope beneath his pillow with his hand, to make sure it was there, and waiting—waiting.

Minute after minute went by, each minute an hour. His temples beat and throbbed as though they held a peal of bells within them, and the murderous fingers grew damp and clammy. Another wine-glass of brandy for his parched and aching throat. At last there is a rustle of silk, and a weary, weary step toiling up the stairs. A thousand sparks seemed to fly before his tightly-closed eyes; that is because his brain is on fire; but he knows very well what is taking place; nay, more, what is going to happen. His wife is coming up-stairs.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE AFTER-SUPPER.

THE pleasantest part of an evening entertainment to host and hostess is, perhaps, after the last carriage has been driven away with its complement of congratulating guests, to hear the comments of more intimate friends who may be staying in the house in corroboration of the fact, that the whole thing has gone off well. Each, as he takes up his candlestick to light him to his room, has kindly words to mingle with his "good-night," which cements the bond of friendship. One feels certain that he or she at least can never have sympathized with the ill-natured remarks of that horrid Sir Benjamin Backbite, or of that still worse Lady Sneerwell, towards whom our eye wandered so often during the evening in smiling hatred; while if any of these charming personages express an inclination for just one more glass of champagne, how hospitably do we, the host, lead them down to the deserted supper-room, and how cheerful a half-hour is consumed while the ladies are undergoing the mysteries of retirement, or, quite as probably, chatting together in each other's apartments.

M. de Lernay had never been more brilliant. Mr. Jonathan Johnson had never spoken in such consecutive syllables, Mr. Percival Potts had never omitted for so lengthened a period to boast of his confounded family, as during the little after-supper which the Frenchman had proposed. The rest of the late actors showed themselves fully equal to the situation; and when Eugenie, accompanied by Frederick Galton, came down to wish them all good-night, it was with one voice that they insisted upon their fair hostess—for whom somebody was waiting so impatiently above stairs—taking her seat among them, if it were but for five minutes, and gracing their somewhat high-wrought revelry.

"'Grant us two things,'"

quoth Bassanio, a common-law barrister in excellent practice, and as much given to fun as fees,

"'Not to deny us, and to pardon us.'"

"It is very late already, sir," returned she, smiling; "and I am afraid your good wife, who left you here with reluctance, remember, will blame me for making you more dissipated than you are naturally inclined to be."

"'We all have wives, whom we protest we love,'"

returned Gratiano, a newly married but by no means juvenile conveyancer, "still, on such occasions as the present—

"'We wish they were in Heaven.'"

"These be the Christian husbands!" exclaimed Shylock, laughing. "I have a daughter—" Here his voice sank and quavered like a harp-string that has lost its tension.

"It is well," whispered Jonathan Johnson, to his next neighbor, "that de Lernay does not fif—fif—finish his quo—quo—quo, does not finish his quotation."

"Very true," returned Percival Potts: "the old fellow seems dreadfully conscious of having been about to put his foot in it. How odd and old he has begun to look! I suppose it's his beard. Shall I propose his health, and so get him out of his difficulty?"

There was a rattling of glasses and beating of fingers upon the table as the sub-editor rose.

The fun was getting a little too boisterous, and Eugenie slipped out of the room while every face was turned towards her father. He sat quite still in his place without speaking, without moving his head while the cheering lasted, and even after it had died away. All were then silent, awaiting a brilliant speech that did not come.

"*We all expect a gentle answer, Jew,*" quoth Percival Potts.

"*Hath not a Jew eyes?* Hath not a Jew *ears?*" began Bassanio, who sat next the host. Then all of a sudden his voice congealed with horror. "By Heaven, he is dying!" cried he. "He has had a fit or something. Run for a doctor—run!"

The guests leaped to their feet, and crowded round the unhappy Frenchman. His disguise and the general merriment had hitherto prevented any one from remarking what had happened; but to the affrighted eyes which now scanned him narrowly enough, it was evident that he had had some kind of stroke which paralysed half his features.

"Hush! be quiet," said Frederick, gravely. "Let us get him to his own room, and, for Heaven's sake, keep his daughter from this sight."

"I am sure," replied Eugenie, calmly, whom the cry of "Run, run for a doctor!" had reached on the very threshold of her own chamber, "I am sure I shall not be in the way; you may trust me, indeed you may, but I must never be kept from him; my place is henceforth by his bedside."

Every man was deeply moved and sorrow-stricken; yet, as they carried him up-stairs in his strange habit, speechless and motionless, it seemed almost like some hideous carnival procession making a mockery of death. Something of the sort seemed to strike Eugenie herself, for when the doctor had arrived, she declined, with thanks for their sympathy, all further aid. So, the masqueraders went below, and resuming their ordinary garments, issued forth into the early morning air, thinking and talking of matters that were not very often present to the minds of any of them.

"His gibes, his songs, his flashes of merriment are done, poor fellow, I fear forever," said Percival Potts, as he linked his arm with that of Johnson. "This is an end to our evening's pleasure that might stagger the most philosophic; young Galton seems half out of his mind with it. Let us ask the lad to walk with us a little way—he is scarcely fit to be left to his own company."

But Frederick declined to do so. "I shall go into the park for a little fresh air," said he, "and try to shake off all this horror." It was too early for the gates to be opened, so he climbed over the railings, as he had done once before.

CHAPTER XL.

THE VIGIL.

"O FATHER," writes our greatest living poet,

> "Wheresoe'er thou be
> That pledgest now thy gallant son,
> A shot, ere half thy draught be done,
> Hath stilled the life that beat from thee."

Even while the mother's head is bowed in prayer that God will save her sailor-boy, his heavy-shotted hammock-shroud drops in his vast and wandering grave; and while the maiden decks her golden hair to please her expected lover—nay, at the very instant when, having left the glass, she turns to set a ringlet right, her future lord is drowned in passing through the ford, or killed in falling from his horse. There is fortunately no spiritual telegraph to communicate the coincidences of pleasure and pain, of prosperity and wretchedness, of life and death, which are continually taking place among us, or we should be always in a state of feverish expectation. Even the frequent thought, "What is my dear boy doing now?" gives many a mother the heartache. In general, she distresses herself unnecessarily—for even boys are not, *at all times*, getting into scrapes—and feels securest at the very time when, to use his own forcible expression, the young gentleman is "coming his greatest cropper." Some weak-minded people, relying upon this fact, are always striving to anticipate calamities—"speculating for the fall," as they call it in the City—picturing to themselves the occurrence of every sort of calamity, under the impression that all evil will be evaded, just as other persons carry an umbrella in order to overrule the pluvial designs of Providence; but misfortune comes, and that suddenly, and whence the most sagacious looked not for it, as the thunder-cloud gathers and breaks in the loveliest autumn blue.

Little guesses Mary Galton, sitting in her lonely bedchamber in Somers Town, on the night that her husband is playing in the stage-scene, what a terrible part he is enacting in the drama of real life.

She can imagine, and does so, although vaguely enough, the gay company and glittering rooms: the applause which he cannot fail to command, as he speaks this and that—for she has made up for her unfortunate mistake, and knows the whole *rôle* of Portia by this time as well as he does. But she does not, of course, dream of the sad conclusion of the supper-party, and far less of what is happening afterwards. She has not gone to bed, because she has got such great and glorious news to tell her darling Frederick, that she could not sleep a wink until she has disburdened her mind of the great tidings. He had scarcely left the house, in order to dine early in Park Lane, and take part in a dress rehearsal (for they did have one rehearsal after all, without which the knife for anatomising Antonio would, for one thing, have been clean forgotten), when a letter arrived for Mrs. Frederick Galton with the Casterton post-mark. "My dear Mary," it began; and ended with, "Your penitent uncle, Robert Morrit." It breathed throughout a spirit of most generous self-reproach and affectionate conciliation, and enclosed a cheque for five hundred pounds. The curate was not a man to do anything, bad or good, by halves. There was to be no more poverty, no more estrangement—no more sorrow at all, as it seemed to Mary.

How tenderly she kissed her child as she laid him in his cot that evening, thanking Heaven that he at least would never know such troubles as those which had so lately threatened to overwhelm his parents. Then putting on her dressing-gown, she sat with the letter in her hand weaving the brightest future that her fancy could portray; but all its liveliest colors and all its choicest gilding were spent upon her husband, and for herself she kept the modest russet brown. She painted him rich, and powerful, and famous—for was he not wise, and great, and good enough already? She made him sought after and petted by the noblest in the land; she made him looked up to by the people; and yet, said she, he shall not love me less, nor be ashamed of his humble little wife. It was with a pardonable pride that she saw herself received in Mr. Morrit's own house at Casterton—the invitation lay before her—and treated with becoming respect by good Aunt Hartopp, who had been wont to be a little hard with her. How charming would a visit be to the Round at Casterton with Frederick, and how they would recall the day when first they met there! She would ask him whether they repented of that meeting, standing on the self-same spot, and he would answer, "No," pressing his dear lips to hers. The cottage at Oldborough should be made bright with many a present, long thought of, but inaccessible heretofore, except to her wishes. Many a luxury should henceforth surround her mother; many a volume should swell the library of sister Jane. She thought of Eugenie, too, between whom and herself no gulf of inequality of fortune would for the future exist to keep their lives apart; how she pitied her, linked to that rude nature, so different from her own—for Mary had heard sad stories, while at Casterton, of its young squire, although she knew nothing of his late exploits. How thankful, thought she, ought herself to be, being such as she was, to have secured so admirable a husband; while Eugenie, so gently born, so accomplished, so divinely fair, had so unfortunately wedded. This was not a pharisaical reflection; for she not only admired and owned the infinite superiority of her new friend, but entertained for her a genuine and affectionate esteem; her honest heart no longer felt the least misgiving—the slightest taint of jealousy—but while she thought of Eugenie, her mind naturally reverted to Frederick, from whom, indeed, it never wandered far.

The night was now far advanced; at the hour when the stage-scene was to be enacted, Mary had taken up the book, and made herself, as far as she could, a spectator of her husband's success; but now the acting must have long been over. He had said that there might be dancing afterwards; but even so, now that the day was breaking, he must surely be home soon. Two o'clock—three o'clock! Four! Mrs. Gideon was a very early riser, and might herself be up and about soon. There was no harm, of course, in her husband's coming home at that time, or any time in the morning; but she did not want that woman to know it. The clock on the stairs struck five. Mary was now no longer apprehensive about Mrs. Gideon; she trembled for the safety of her husband. What if he had met with some terrible accident—been run over—murdered, perhaps? It was too terrible to think of. Such calamities were only to be found in novels. The sun was shining broad and fair, and the birds—for even in Somers Town there are many birds—were chirping and singing. Still, a pain lies within her—a something oppressive sits upon her brow and brain. She had kept watch too long, perhaps, and is worn out: that must be it. He is coming at last; far away up the deserted street she hears that well-known footfall. Why, then, does not her heart leap up like a bent sapling freed from the cruel cord? She knows not why; she only knows that it is tethered still. With trembling limbs, she approaches the window, which has been open all night, and cautiously peers forth. Yes, it is her husband; but there is something strange about his appearance, that strikes her with vague dismay. As he comes quite close, she perceives that his clothes are damp and shiny, and hang about him tightly; not a drop of rain has fallen through the night, and yet he is wet through. As he puts the latch-key noiselessly into the door, she catches for the first time a sight of his countenance, over which his hat has been slouched. Can that be her Frederick—the same bright, glorious being who left her but twelve hours ago, with a kiss and a smile? He looks as though he could never smile again. A face so pale, so haggard, so perplexed and terrified, she had never before seen—a face so terrible in its mute agony, that she feared to meet it; but throwing off the robe in which she had been sitting, she leaped into bed, and turning her eyes from the fierce light with a shudder, closed them in feigned sleep.

He was a long time coming up-stairs; there was no noise except a certain "click, click," for which she could not account; but not a step was audible. He came up with his shoes in his hand, and she heard him put them down very carefully upon the floor of his own little room. Before entering that apartment, no matter what might be the hour of his return, it was his invariable custom to come into her room; she had entreated him to do so, protesting, even if it should awaken her, that the sleep which followed was always more refreshing after she had been assured of his being at home and in safety; but upon this occasion he made no such visit. He had never taken half the time to undress before. She heard the quick spirt of a match and then the crackling of sticks; what could he possibly want a fire for? Mrs.

Gideon kept her fires laid even in June, because it did away with any necessity for grate ornaments; but she never intended them to be lit. The register was down, as Mary knew; but there was nothing for it but to lie still; he would soon find that out for himself. But a man does not soon find out the cause of even the most ordinary domestic mischance, and a good deal of—well—cursory language generally takes place on the part of a master of a house left to his own devices, before the plumber, or the glazier, or the chimney-sweep, is sent for to put things to rights. Presently, Frederick opened his window, being probably half-smothered, and then—yes, he was trying to put the register back with the poker. Poor, clumsy Frederick! how Mary longed to help him; but then she did not dare. Something told her that he wished to be alone, and that she should not know of his presence in that room at all. And now there was a smell as of an indifferently conducted laundry establishment—the drying of very damp cloth garments. Why should he be so anxious to dry his own clothes, and at such an hour as that? What could he have been doing? What was the matter? She heard Mrs. Gideon knocking at the dressing-room door. "Was he a-settin' her house on fire at that time in the morning?" was her sarcastic inquiry, as though, if he had only waited until a little later, arson would have been a very venial crime, if not a virtue.

"It's all right," returned Frederick. "I have got up to do some writing, Mrs. Gideon, and have cooked myself a cup of coffee—that's all." He did keep some excellent coffee in his dressing-room, in a private locker, into which the larcenous landlady had not as yet been able to penetrate, and also a coffee-pot, in order to save appearances; but the coffee was only there for security, not for use. Mrs. Gideon appeared satisfied, although by no means pleased, with this reply; but Mary shuddered at her husband's deliberate falsehood. She had never, to her own knowledge, heard him tell a lie before.

What a voice he spoke with too!—thin, hollow tones, that strove in vain to be cheery; they were like the echo of his usual speech, rather than the speech itself. A few minutes more, and he was in the bed-room. He trod softly to the window, and pulled the shutters together, which had not been closed all night. She was glad of that, for it placed her in shadow; still, when he came to the bedside, and stooped over her, to kiss her forehead as usual, she was afraid that her quick, frightened breathing would betray that she was not asleep. Asleep! If the letter beneath her pillow had been sufficient to keep her awake thus long, with its little budget of good news, how much more wakeful did she feel when that letter and its contents had sunk to nothing in comparison with the vague but intense terror that seized upon her, and was shaking every limb! He did not, however, approach her, but lay down without a word; if she could have seen, she would have known that he did not even look towards her, but kept his eyes carefully averted; yet he well knew, by that inexplicable consciousness which possesses us on all like occasions, that the seeming sleeper was not asleep.

"I am afraid I woke you, Mary," said he, presently.

"Yes, dear." She could not trust herself to say more.

"It is very late," he continued; "nearly four, I saw as I came up-stairs."

He had been putting the clock back, then, and more than an hour; that was the noise she had heard.

"What has happened, Frederick, love, to keep you so late?" She spoke wearily, and with her eyes closed, as though his answer did not much matter; but her heart beat for it tumultuously, and she feared lest she should not hear it when it came, such a singing was in her ears.

"Nothing, love," he said. Then, as if with a great effort of memory, he added: "Yes, something *has* happened; you may as well know it at once. Monsieur de Lernay has had a severe stroke of paralysis; it took place while he sat at the supper-table."

"Alas, alas!" said Mary; "God help him, poor man! How very, very shocking! What a terrible blow it will be for poor Eugenie! She will have nobody now to take her part. How did Mr. Meyrick—"

"Don't talk any more, Mary, just now," interrupted Frederick, hurriedly, almost harshly—"don't do it. I want rest, rest, rest!"

His gaunt and hollow features gave ample witness that therein he was telling the truth. But although his eyes were firmly closed, and his body remained motionless as that of a dead man, no rest came to Frederick Galton's brain, neither then, nor for many a night to come.

CHAPTER XLI.

KIND INQUIRIES.

ALL next day, Frederick kept within doors, on the plea of illness. Yet he rose even before his usual hour; and when the maid-of-all-work came to "do" his room, she found no trace of drying clothes or anything unusual. But he spoke and moved like one in a lethargy. He seemed to take a second or two to comprehend even the most ordinary remark that was addressed to him, and if unaddressed, he looked unconscious of what was passing about him. When Mary, with beaming face, communicated to him at breakfast-time the glad tidings from Casterton, he received them like a piece of foreign intelligence in the *Times*, which, no matter how large letters it may be printed on, does not much disturb our private mind. "That's good news indeed," said he, wringing his words out one by one; "excellent news. Dear Mary, I am so glad for your sake."

He let her rise and put her arms about his neck, but he did not return her caress, and appeared but little more conscious of it than a statue that is being garlanded with flowers. Then a sudden suspicion smote through Mary's breast like an arrow sharp and barbed—Frederick had become unfaithful to her; he had at last met with that somebody against whom they used to warn her—some accomplished brilliant beauty, worthy of his choice—and cared for his lowly ignorant wife no longer.

"Glad of it for *my* sake!" said she, piteously; "and why not for your own? Are we not one, Frederick, bound up together for life? Does not joy alight on us at the same moment? Would not sorrow or shame strike us through with the same blow?"

Frederick shuddered. "Sorrow," said he, "but not shame, wife. If I did some terrible and heinous act, you would be sorry, Mary—very sorry, I know—you might even blush for me; but it would not be for you whose soul is unspotted, to feel the sting of shame."

Her suspicion, then, was too true; but at all events he saw his error; he was sorry; every syllable told her that he repented having done her wrong.

"Husband," returned she, "dear husband, I do not know what weight is on your mind: I do not seek to know. But, be assured, no matter what it is, that my great love would help to bear it up. If—if" (here she knelt down by his chair) "I had anything to forgive you, Frederick, would I not do so, think you?"

"Yes, Mary," (he did not take his hand away when she strove to fondle it, but his fingers gave no answering clasp or touch), "I do believe you would; you are not a woman, but an angel—although too good for me, Mary. Most women's sins are rose-pink; most men's, scarlet; but the wickedest thought that you ever entertained is Virtue's self compared to what my brain breeds."

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," murmured the woman, with shut eyes; "and forgive us our trespasses." Never had man more loving beadswoman, or fairer intercessor, than had Frederick Galton in Mary his wife.

"But suppose the evil has been done," returned he, in hollow tones—"has been done, and is irrevocable—"

"Repent, repent," mournfully interrupted she, "and avoid it for the future."

"I knew it," muttered Frederick, bitterly; "how could it be otherwise?—But Mary, dear, suppose it were not a thing to do again—not some such sin as you are thinking of, but a crime—"

"Then make reparation to the utmost, and ask forgiveness of God."

Frederick groaned and hid his face.

"Husband, dear, let us pray. If there is any sin upon your soul, I pray God to let me share it, if I may thereby share the punishment."

"Heaven forbid!" murmured Frederick, earnestly. "But let us talk no more in this fashion. There is no weight such as you imagine oppressing me; I am unwell, Mary, that is all. When the body is sick, the heart is faint. I feel morbid, depressed, and haunted with the sense of woe impending, but what has really fallen is only good fortune. How unthankful I must seem to you! Where is my uncle's letter? Let me read it once again."

"Do, darling, do. Is he not kind? Is he not sorry for the past? Do you not forgive him all? You will write to him to-day, Frederick, will you not? Or shall *I* write? Perhaps that would be better."

"Much better, Mary."

"But I shall be so frightened, and I know there will be all sorts of mistakes, love. So you must read it over, please, before it goes. You couldn't write me out what I should say, could you, Frederick? Just a few words for me to copy. No, you're not well enough for that. You have actually not touched one morsel this morning. Dear husband, I think I know what it is which makes you so sad. You are thinking of poor Eugenie."

"Yes, I was; that is it," returned Frederick, mechanically.

"Poor girl—poor dear girl," murmured Mary. "Heaven knows how I pity her. Don't you think, love, since you are so unwell, that I had better go to Park Lane myself, to see her in this trouble? Would she not think it kind?"

"No, no, no," answered Frederick, vehemently. "You must not go near the house; you would do more harm than good. Hush! what is that man crying in the street? What a noise he makes with his lying news!"

"*Second edition of this* morning's *pa*pers! Mysterious and *hor*rible death of a gentleman of *fortune* in the Serpentine water in *Hyde Park.* Suspected *mur*der of a *gen*tleman of *for*tune!"

Through the open window, every syllable the newsman bawled and bawled again was heard with distinctness. Nearer and nearer he drew, till at last he stood exactly opposite the area railings, and proffered his wares in his natural voice across them. "Second edition, sir; great news, my lady, this morning. A gentleman of fashion found drowned in the Serpentine; here it is, with the latest particulars. You will seldom find a better sixpennyworth than this, I assure you: only sixpence."

"Here is the money, man; go!" cried Frederick, furiously. "No, I don't want your paper; it's all lies."

"But this is true, sir," returned the newsman, confidentially. "I know a party myself who is brother-in-law to the party as found the unfortunate victim; quite a young gentleman he was, and there seems to be little doubt that there was some foul—"

Frederick slammed the window down, and pulled the blind over the man's face. "These sort of fellows will never take a civil answer," cried he. "What were we talking of, when that brute first interrupted us?"

"*Mur*der or *sui*cide," screamed the human parrot with redoubled energy, after the refreshment of subdued conversation—"suspected *mur*der of a *gen*tleman of *for*tune!"

"We were talking of Eugenie," said Mary; "I trust that her husband will be kind and comfort her in this great sorrow. I think if one of us does not go, we certainly ought to send to inquire after her father."

"Just as you please, Mary; perhaps you had better go yourself. The servant will be sure to bring back some garbled report. You will have a cab, of course—there is no more necessity for close economy, you know—and you had better take your nurse and child."

"If you wish it, Frederick, I will do so; though I should not come to any hurt, alone. I hope, however, that Mr. John Meyrick will not be in the house; I have a sort of horror of that man."

To look at Frederick's face, it seemed as though he had a sort of horror of him too.

"He will not harm you," said he, gravely, after a little pause; "and since you have determined upon going, it will be just as well to go at once. I shall be anxious, very anxious to hear your news."

It is a long journey from Somers Town to Park Lane, even if the wayfarer is not dependent upon a chain of omnibuses, by no means "in correspondence," but indulges in the luxury of "a through transit" per cab. Considering that Frederick must have known this very well, he grew most unjustifiably impatient for his wife's return. He began to pull out his watch, and stare through the window before she could well have reached the place of her destination. He lit cigar after cigar, and before he had smoked them half way through tossed them into the grate, and commenced walking restlessly up and down the room, like an hyena. Curiously enough, when the time grew near when she might be reasonably expected, he left the parlor, and retired to his dressing-room, which was at the back of the house.

There he sat at the open window, gazing vacantly at the bare strips of garden-ground in which there were no flowers, and wherein the only trees were clothes-props; but his ears drank in the slightest sound from within the house. When the front-door bell rang at last, he sat himself swiftly down at the writing-table, and made as though he were busy with some manuscript. He heard his wife enter the house and look into the sitting-room, and come up-stairs with hurried steps. He knew that she was outside the door, and hesitating there before she knocked.

"Come in, dear," answered he, with composure; "I hope you bring good news. How *is* the poor old man? Has he recovered his speech at all? How is Eugenie?" He rained these inquiries upon his wife with great rapidity, like sentences out of a phrase-book, but he never took his eyes off the pages before him.

"Monsieur de Lernay is somewhat better; I don't know whether he can speak or not; but, oh, Frederick, I know you will be so shocked—for though you didn't like him, as, indeed, nobody could, yet, for the sake of Auld Lang Syne, you must needs be sorry—Mr. Meyrick has killed himself!"

"Gracious goodness!" exclaimed Frederick, looking up for an instant at his wife's face. "What! at Casterton? at the Grange?"

"I am not speaking of the old Squire, Frederick: it is John Meyrick himself, I mean; your own old playmate, years ago. I knew you would be touched."

"Is he dead?" asked Frederick, keeping his hand over his eyes. "This is truly horrible. Quite dead—you are sure?"

"Alas! yes; there is no doubt of that. He was brought home this morning dead and drowned. He it doubtless was of whom the newspaper man was telling us. There is quite a crowd about the house."

"And Eugenie; how does she bear this second misfortune?"

"She is wonderful—wonderful!" returned Mary. "Even if John Meyrick was ever so bad a man, of course, she cannot but feel such a sudden blow as this. She does feel it, I am sure. Yet, with her father speechless, and perhaps dying in one room, and her husband a corpse in another, she is quite collected and firm. I shall never forget her face, as she told me what had happened. Instead of being at the party last night, he had remained in his own room, it seems; and fancy, Frederick! he had not been sober for hours. Is not that terrible?"

"Go on, go on."

"Well, they suppose that he took to drinking afresh—for there was an empty brandy-bottle by his bedside—and so brought on a fit of delirium. Then he began to think of suicide. Under his pillow was found a bell-rope, taken out of his wife's room—poor Eugenie shuddered when she said '*my* room'—with a slip-knot made in it. But his courage seems to have failed him with respect to that mode of death. He left the house unobserved, when everybody was engaged about poor Monsieur de Lernay, and wandered into Hyde Park, and to the Serpentine. He was determined enough then, poor wretch; he was found drowned in quite shallow water, close to the bank."

"Close to the bank," repeated Frederick, mechanically, "yet under water?"

"Just so; and with his blank face upward—not downward. That is the only thing which throws a doubt about its being an act of suicide. Of course it was terrible for Eugenie to have to tell all this; but she said she would rather do so, once for all, and that I must never ask her about it again. She enjoined me to be sure and repeat to you, word for word, all that she told me. He had his card-case with him, so the body was brought home at once from the Royal Humane Society's offices; but he was so altered that the servants hardly knew him. The inquest, they say, will be held on Wednesday. Oh, there was one thing more which brought the tears into my eyes; he had taken with him his wife's bouquet holder—the very one which you saw in her hand last evening—and it was found lying by the dead man's side, with the flowers still in it. 'Tell your husband *that*, as well as the rest,' said Eugenie. Perhaps she thought it might win a better place for the unhappy man in your memory, for she mentioned it twice and bade me not forget it.—How pale and faint you look, love! I told her that your kind heart would bleed for her. Sad as our talk was I am truly glad I went."

"Yes, it was well," said the young man, musing; "and now, dearest, leave me here alone a little. This fatal news has unnerved me. I shall feel better left to myself."

Once more he placed himself by the open window, loosening his cravat at the same time, and gazed upon the waste of brick and mortar. As the refrain of some foolish song, or as some witless jest, will sometimes haunt the mind for years, so did that dusty, mean, and almost squalid picture before Frederick's unregarding eyes become engraved for aye upon his memory: for in the fiery ordeals of the soul, all circumstances, however trivial, whether in person, place, or thing, partake for the future of those dread epochs, and are lifted henceforth from their natural level, while the brain, unconscious as a camera, takes in, at such times, impressions of all that surrounds us upon its indelible plate.

CHAPTER XLII.

AN INTERESTING EVENT.

WHEN an editor makes public boast of the importance of his journal, he dwells upon the various degrees of men who purchase or read it, and of the out-of-the-way and distant parts of the world to which it penetrates; but a much more striking subject for reflection upon the wonders of the press is the enthralling personal interest with which every copy of a great newspaper must be received and devoured. The advertisement-sheet alone—independently of those momentous intimations in its second column of forgiveness or renunciation of the prodigal, the farewell or return of the wronged, the passionate last appeal to the destroyer, each of which is a romance of real life compressed into a few lines—the advertisements alone, I say, bear hope and disappointment, comfort or despair, to hundreds, although to the tens of thousands they may seem only stupid puffs or artful swindles.

The births are ruin to the heir-presumptive; the marriages are wormwood to the jilted; the deaths, which we read so glibly, fill scores of hearts with unutterable woe.

Darkest of all to a few is that page which contains the annals of crime. From it the poor wretch, who has hidden, as he hopes, his fraud so cunningly that no man shall unravel it, learns for the first time that all his pains have been unavailing, and that the clue is in the hands of those who will follow it up to the bitter end; the forger peruses the history of his own act, writ by no lenient hand; the murderer listens aghast to the first whisper of a voice that he deemed was stifled, but which, as he now well perceives, shall presently grow to a great cry of blood for blood.

Among the most exciting and sensational of newspaper topics, at the time of which we speak, were the rumors and suspicions incident to the death of John Meyrick. His wealth, which of course was greatly exaggerated; the position in society which M. de Lernay had endeavored, and, to a certain extent, had succeeded in securing for him; his youth, thus suddenly cut off in the midst, it was whispered, of terrible dissipations; the beauty and accomplishments of Eugenie, already well-nigh overwhelmed by the misfortune that had overtaken her father upon the same night on which she had become a widow—all these things were elements enough of wonder and curiosity. But in addition to what was ascertainable, there were the strangest rumors afloat, which, drifting hither and thither in all directions, clung like fireships to the unwieldy vessel, public opinion, and set it alight from stem to stern. Mr. John Meyrick had half murdered M. de Lernay, and then killed himself; he had attempted to destroy his wife, who was only preserved from his brutal violence at the expense of the life of her father; mad with drink, he had devised a scheme for the annihilation of two hundred persons of fashion at a dramatic entertainment, and in despair at its failure, this amateur Guy Faux had put an end to his own existence. Nor were there wanting sensation paragraphs, which took what might be called the other side of the question, and represented the dead man as a victim; and it was curious to mark how the poor halfpenny-worth of fact was almost always present amid the most monstrous falsehoods. The Frenchman and his daughter, it was said, had ruled the unhappy deceased, who was of weak mind, with a rod of iron; his refusal to comply with some humiliating request of his father-in-law, had driven the latter gentleman into an apoplectic fit, through violent passion; at which calamity, the poor young man—who had in reality a good heart—was so horror-stricken, that he sought refuge in a watery grave. Nay, there were even statements that John Meyrick had not committed suicide at all, but had come to his death by violence. Some of his relatives had only too good reasons to wish for his decease. So estranged had he been from his own family, that although actually in the house upon that festive occasion which had terminated so tragically, he had never left his bedroom, except to take a walk in the park when all was over. He was partial, it seemed, to a quiet life, while his wife—a Frenchwoman and a Catholic—and her father, who resided with them, were given up to fashionable frivolities. The paragraph writers were not, they said, at present at liberty to say more, but the public need not be surprised if jealousy was found to have been at the bottom of this truly mysterious affair. Every device, in short, for inflaming curiosity was put in practice, and not the least effective was the pretence of judicial forbearance, with which, when they had told all they knew, and all they could invent, the writers concluded their remarks: "We abstain, for obvious reasons, from dwelling upon this painful subject further; but we are in a position to state, that at the inquest to be held on Wednesday next there will be revelations of a most unexpected kind."

Conceive with what more or less of interest all these reports were read or listened to by the principal personages in this history. We know, from the most trustworthy authorities, how difficult it is for even the chivalrous hero of a novel to shut his ears when he suddenly finds himself the topic of conversation among strangers; his curiosity is too strong for his sense of honor, and not until he has overheard the most striking of the observations in question, and the speakers show signs of beginning to tire of the subject, and to change it for something else, is he compelled, by the natural frankness of his disposition, to reveal himself, to their astonishment and confusion. This, of course, puts an end to the scandal. But when people talk about our personal friends, and in the newspapers, it is impossible to stop them, even if we felt inclined to do so; and since it can do no additional harm to read what is so widely disseminated, we ourselves (and not altogether without interest) peruse it, like the rest of the world.

At all events, an inquest is a judicial proceeding which it is only right that everybody should make themselves acquainted with, and if it happens to be held upon the body of a personal acquaintance—well, that is very shocking, of course, but it does not detract from its exciting character.

The delicate Mr. Chester's principal objection to self-destruction was, that it subjected even persons of distinction to be "sat upon" by coroners, and "viewed" by jurors, and Mr. Percival Potts was a disciple of the same school. The political organ over which he presided, no longer as sub, but as sole editor, without at all disdaining to improve its circulation by exciting paragraphs about the mysterious decease of the gentleman of fashion in Hyde Park, was eloquent in its leaders against the mischievous notoriety of coroners' inquests; the unnecessary prying of the public eye into the affairs of distinguished families, at a time when grief ought to be held most sacred; and the mingling of vulgar conventionalisms with the solemnities of death. Among people in Whitechapel, coroners' inquests might be well enough, and even afford a balm to the feelings of surviving relatives; but among persons of condition, they should never be held, unless under circumstances of great suspicion, since they only added shame to sorrow. To these cogent remarks, interspersed with Latin quotations, a little marred by the printer, the *Daily Democrat* responded, that it was only among the higher classes that there was any necessity for coroners' inquests at all; that in Belgrave Square more people came by their deaths unfairly, and generally at the hands of their immediate heirs, than in any area of similar extent in the whole of London, no matter how densely populated. Descending from general abuse of society to special libel, the article concluded with a reference to certain attempts which were being made by some portions of the press to burke inquiry into the circumstances attendant upon the death of John Meyrick, Esq.

This pretty newspaper quarrel did not diminish the general excitement; and the appointed Wednesday was looked for with more anxiety than most days which have given promise of their favorite food to a mystery-loving public. It came at last, as all days come, no matter how lingering is their approach, how dark their dawn, how big with woeful fate to the human watcher. The inquest was held at noon, and did not conclude till four. At six, Frederick Galton held in his hand a copy of the *Unicorn*, containing the full particulars, and forwarded to him anonymously by special messenger. On plea of continued illness, he had never left his house since the night of the dramatic performance. Mr. Jonathan Johnson had called, but he had been too unwell to see him; too unwell to eat or drink, too unwell to sleep, too unwell to speak, beyond a few commonplace observations to his wife; too unwell for any company but his own. Mrs. Gideon had remarked to Mary, with whom she now endeavored to establish confidential relations, that her husband really seemed to be "queerer" than ever. "I used to think him rather a fast young man—I did indeed, ma'am, for I will not deceive you—but I am now convinced that it was all his queerness. Martha is quite of my opinion, and indeed *she* thinks he is downright wrong in his head."

Mary repeated this to Frederick, in order to make him laugh, to rouse him, if it were but for a moment, from the morbid melancholy in which he seemed to be plunged, and at the same time to draw his attention indirectly to the strangeness of his behavior; perhaps, he might thereby be induced to send for a doctor, which he had somewhat vehemently refused to do. He did not, indeed, laugh at Mrs. Gideon's opinion of him, but it seemed to awaken some faint interest within him.

"She always thought I was queer, did she?" said he, smiling.

"Yes, she did indeed, Frederick; and as for Martha, it seems she always thought you cracked."

"Cracked, eh? How funny!" Frederick smiled again.

Mary, delighted to see him thus won a little from himself, pursued the subject.

"And the fact is, my dear love, that many other persons entertain the very same idea about you. You don't know what odd things you do. That was actually one of the objections urged against our marriage by more than one person I could name; they said you were so flighty. Commonplace people don't understand you. I should never have understood you, of course, myself, if it had not been that love played the interpreter. Although you are so clever, and I am so dull, I know you, Frederick dear—ah! better than all the world beside."

"But others think I'm mad, do they, Mary?" He was looking straight before him into the empty grate, and not, as of old, at her, but still it was something that he could be got to talk at all.

"Well, they would scarcely dare to say that you were mad, Frederick; but if you ever happened to do anything very extraordinary and out of the way, I do believe that they would say there was no wonder, and that they had always expected something of that sort."

"You really think they would say that?" said Frederick, rousing himself.

"I am sure they would," answered Mary, laughing. "Why, my dear, dear Fred, you don't know how funnily you behave sometimes. If I was not your wife —and more than that, as I have said, a very loving one —I, too, should now and then believe that you were not quite—you won't be angry, love—not quite in your right mind."

Frederick was not angry; far from it; he had, on the contrary, seemed to be in rather better spirits on the day after this conversation, which took place at breakfast time, upon the morning on which the inquest was to be held; but he retired in the afternoon as usual to his own room. It was thither that the extra edition of the *Unicorn* had been carried to him; and there he sat alone, with the unopened newspaper in his hand, gazing upon it with a curious fascination. When beginning authorship, he had experienced something of the same kind with respect to some journal which he had reason to know contained a critique upon his poems—of the same kind, but how fearfully different in degree. Such might have made his heart go pit-a-pat, for the circulation of a young author's blood is more easily hastened than that of his book, but it would never have brought the drops of sweat upon his forehead, as now. Had he been a *clairvoyant*, and been able to possess himself of all that lay hid in that little roll of print, at a single glance, what long minutes of agony would he have been spared! Even when he had undone the paper, he shrank from looking at the very place where he knew that what he sought was to be found. He ran his eye over the *Court Circular*, over the *Money Article*, over the *Amusements*—how strange it seemed to him that people should enjoy concerts, theatres, casinos, Shakspeare readings—ay, by-the-by, how was poor Shylock by this time? "Hopelessly ill," was the last news that had been heard of him. Eugenie had returned no other answer the second time he had sent to inquire after M. de Lernay. There was nothing more to say to him (Frederick) after that message about the bouquet-holder. She would judge him leniently—there was no doubt of that; but henceforth, no communication would ever pass between her and him.

How strange it seemed, when only a few days ago she had greeted him so warmly, and spoke of Mary with such tenderness, and made such plans for friendship for the future! How a single act changes the whole course of our being! how a hasty word, a moment's evil impulse, leads to immediate ruin! The path of Life skirts always an unseen precipice, and where the flowers grow most luxuriantly, and tempt the wayfarer, is often the most dangerous spot; we tread on roses into the abyss. *The inquest upon Mr. Meyrick.* His eye was upon it at last; he could avoid the huge black staring type no longer. Two, three, four, five columns long, and the verdict over the page. The verdict! He felt himself growing ghastly pale. His heart seemed to stop suddenly, like a hitched pendulum. As a debauched novel-reader, whom nothing can interest short of *dénouements,* feels a desire to plunge into, to begin with the conclusion of the third volume, so Frederick yearned to know the end of the whole matter, but did not dare to inform himself. He preferred to gather what might be coming from what had gone before. The shadow would doubtless project itself dark and defined enough for him to guess at the form of that which threw it. He would let the evidence tell upon his own mind as though he were a juryman. What has Park-keeper No. 1 to say about this mysterious affair, which, it is written, has "thrown the west-end of the metropolis into a state of such intense excitement," and caused the jury-room to be "crowded to suffocation by persons of the highest fashion?"

Park-keeper No. 1 has not much to say, and seems to have a difficulty in saying that little; his evidence is a collection of short answers in reply to elaborate but not very logical questions, and reads like a conversation-page out of one of M. Dumas's later feuilletons. What it all comes to, however, is this. "Being upon duty on the night of the eighteenth of June in question, he perceived, an hour or so after daybreak, but before the park-gates were opened, a dark object floating at the northeast corner of the Serpentine. Leastways it was not floating, but only appeared to do so in the distance. As he neared it he found it to be a human body, lying face upwards in shallow water. The water covered the face perhaps a couple of inches deep. It was the body of a young gentleman—he had seen it again to-day, and it was the same body. It was dressed in fine black clothes—what were evening clothes, he dared say; but wearing a uniform himself both day and night, he was no great judge of that matter. It wore a heavy gold chain; and in the shirt front were diamond studs. It was lying with the face upward and quite dead. The face was slightly discolored, and the eyelids in particular almost black. There was no mark or sign of violence whatever upon the body so far as he could see. He had seen a good many; yes, more than a dozen—more than a score, he should say—of drowned persons in the Royal Humane at one time or another, and they all looked like that. He could not account for the face being upward, unless the party had turned hisself round. He did not think that was likely to happen after death; declined to say that it was impossible to happen. Was only there to say what he knew, and did not wish to communicate his speculations; just so. Called assistance, and helped to convey the body into the Royal Humane. Did not wait to see it stripped, being well aware that the time had long elapsed in which resuscitation could be hoped for. The body was stiff and cold. Saw nobody in the neighborhood of the spot; nor, previous to discovering the corpse, had heard any noise or outcry. Had there been any such within a quarter of an hour of the time he reached the place, he must have heard it."

This evidence was more or less corroborated by three persons who had assisted the last witness to remove the body.

Then came the medical witness, Mr. Amphib, one of the assistant surgeons to the Royal Humane Society.

"Had examined the deceased immediately upon his having been brought in from the water. There was no sign of life whatever. The usual means for resuscitation were employed, but were totally unavailing. It was very unusual to resuscitate a body after an immersion of five minutes, although by no means unexampled. An authentic case was even reported of resuscitation after twenty minutes; no chance of life was ever thrown away, and what could be done was done in this case. His own opinion was that the deceased had been immersed at least twenty minutes. There was every sign of death by drowning. The skin was cold, pale, and contracted, the face and neck were covered with livid patches, the expression of the countenance calm and peaceful; the eyes were half open, and the pupils much dilated. The mouth was closed, and the teeth tightly set. This last symptom was rather unusual. It might have been caused by the determination of the suicide. If the deceased had committed suicide, he must have been very determined, according to the preceding evidence. Persons had, however, drowned themselves, within his personal knowledge, in water equally shallow. All the symptoms of death by drowning would be precisely the same whether the water were deep or shallow, even if it covered the mouth only by a few inches. Only, under the latter circumstance, there would probably be but little water found in the stomach. In the present case, he found but very little. There was as much brandy as there was water. (Sensation.) If exceedingly intoxicated, a man would of course be more likely to be accidentally drowned if he fell even in shallow water, than if sober. He could not say, from the *post-mortem* examination, whether the deceased had died in a state of intoxication or otherwise; certainly not. He did not attach any great importance to the fact that the body had been found upon its back with the face upwards; the probability of suicide would doubtless have been greatly diminished by such a circumstance, had the face not been immersed. There were no signs whatever to excite the suspicion that the deceased had been foully dealt with, except the lividity of the neck; it was unusually discolored, and more so than the face itself. Bruises of considerable extent are often seen upon the drowned, when the body has been floating loosely in water, which may be the result of accidents to which it has been exposed in that position; but in still and shallow water, there should be no bruises. The spots upon the neck of the deceased might by possibility be finger-marks: that idea had undoubtedly occurred to him. The marks he alluded to were slight ecchymosed depressions, upon either side of the neck, such as would be caused by digital pressure. He was not prepared to say that they must needs be finger-marks. In several cases, there had even been found a deep ecchymosed circle round the neck of a drowned person, such as to raise the strongest suspicion of foul play; yet in one instance it was discovered that deceased had made a previous attempt to commit suicide by hanging; and in another, the mark had been produced by the pressure of the string of his cloak, which the tide had drifted to the opposite direction from that of the boat to which he was struggling. A practitioner must needs, therefore, be cautious in giving a decided opinion, founded on such appearances, as to whether an act of drowning was the result of accident, suicide, or murder. That was a matter for the jury to decide, and not for him. He had been asked his private opinion since the occurrence had taken place, and he had given it; yes, pretty decidedly. He had said that the deceased had come to his end by suicide. A person in a state of such intoxication as might be produced by the brandy found in the stomach of the deceased, could, however, in his opinion have drowned himself, by accident, in very little water: he had known an instance of a drunkard meeting his death by falling with his face in a mere puddle. In that case, the man was not found with his face upward—true. He had no further evidence to offer."

John Edmund Freke, valet to the deceased, deposed: "He identified the body of his master, John Meyrick, Esquire, junior. It was brought home upon the morning of the nineteenth of June, about eight o'clock, dead and drowned. He had seen him leave the house about five hours before, after a great party which had been held there. He had left it soon after M. de Lernay, his father-in-law, had been taken with the fit, and immediately after some of the guests—some as had stayed to help to carry that gentleman up-stairs, and such like—had gone away. Mr. Meyrick had taken no notice of his father-in-law's misfortune; none whatever. They had not been on good terms. Mr. Meyrick was to blame, as far as he knew. He would often use dreadful language towards M. de Lernay, when speaking of him to witness. He would do so both drunk and sober. But he was almost always drunk. He should say he was naturally of a melancholy disposition; he never seemed to enjoy himself much, not even in his cups. On the morning of the eighteenth of June, he had been brought home drunk, after having been out all night, and he, witness, had put him to bed in the dressing-room. He had done so more than once before. He did observe something peculiar in his behavior upon that occasion, which he had not observed at any previous time. He was particularly wild in his talk and manner; he would without doubt have been dangerous, if he had not been so entirely prostrated by liquor. He seemed to be muttering threats—so far as anything could be made out at all of what he said—but whether against himself or others, witness could not say. His own impression was that the deceased was upon the verge of an attack of the horrors: yes, he meant of delirium tremens. Deceased had remained up-stairs all the ensuing day, refusing the food that was brought to him, but taking quantities of drink. He had nearly emptied a large bottle of brandy that stood in his dressing-room. He never came down-stairs at all, to his (witness's) knowledge, until all the company had gone, even those who had stayed to sup with M. de Lernay. He left the house quite alone. Nobody attempted to stop him. Nobody but M. de Lernay would have dared to do such a thing. Witness saw him passing through the hall, looking very wild and haggard. He was in evening dress. After leaving the house, he turned southward down Park Lane, and towards Piccadilly; he walked very fast. He did not cross to park side of the road."

Clara Roberts, upper housemaid in the establishment of the deceased, deposed: "She made the dressing-room bed as usual upon the morning of June nineteenth, and under the pillow found a rope coiled up, with a slip-knot at one end of it. It was one of the bell-ropes from her mistress's room. There was no such rope in the dressing-room; the bells there had handles to them, and no ropes. It was not at all unusual for the deceased to pass the night in his dressing-room. The brandy bottle kept in the cabinet by the bedside was nearly empty. It was quite full on the evening of the seventeenth; it was refilled on that day by the last witness. Her master was accustomed to drink much more than was good for him. Did not see him at all during the last six-and-thirty hours of his life, but understood that he had been brought home on the morning of the eighteenth, in a worse state than usual."

Police-constable X 490 deposed: "Was called by a park-keeper, the first witness, to assist in removing the deceased from the Serpentine to the Royal Humane Society's establishment. Returned immediately afterwards to the spot where the body was found. Within a few feet of that place, and partially covered with water, we picked up a gilt bouquet-holder [produced] filled with flowers. There were no marks of struggling, or anything whatever that betokened an encounter about the spot."

Clara Roberts recalled: "Identified the bouquet-holder as belonging to her mistress, Mrs. John Meyrick. She had used it upon the night of the party on the eighteenth. The flowers, to the best of her belief, were the same flowers."

John Edmund Freke recalled: "Could not swear whether the deceased had a bouquet-holder in his hand when he left the house or not; should not have been surprised, or taken any particular notice if he had; should not have been surprised at anything."

The appearance of the next witness, said the newspaper report, caused intense excitement, it being understood that his evidence had not been forthcoming until that very afternoon. He was clothed in filthy rags, held together by a little string; his face was scarred with disease, and dreadfully emaciated; and his appearance altogether denoted the extremity of poverty and wretchedness. He gave his name as John Raun. "Was by trade a weaver, but had been out of work for several months. Had had no home or lodging of any kind for weeks; no, nor a good meal since the Derby day, when some gentlemen had given him some chicken and lobster, and what not, out of their drag. Had slept in one or other of the parks most nights lately, unless when it was wet, when he had used the Adelphi arches. Was sleeping in Hyde Park on the night of the eighteenth of June, under a big tree, not far from the north-eastern end of the water. Did not sleep well, because of pains in the joints, to which he was subject, and woke very often. Was awakened about daybreak on the morning of the nineteenth, and could not go to sleep again. About an hour after that time, or perhaps more, he couldn't say for certain—the clock might have struck once or twice—he saw a young gentleman coming towards the water from the direction of Park Lane. He was dressed in fine clothes, and he had that gilt thing in his hand with flowers in it, which had been shown to witness. He smelled the flowers as he came along, walking very slowly. Had seen the body of the deceased; it was not he as came along by the water first; witness could swear to that (sensation). His attention was called to the young gentleman because he recognized him as having been one of those who gave him the nice food he had spoken of on Epsom Downs. He had been particular kind to him, and emptied half a pie and some salad into his hat. Of course, therefore, witness knowed him again very well, and took especial notice. Witness kept himself out of sight behind the tree, but intended presently to come out and beg something. Before the young man got off the green, but when he was close to the roadway, witness saw another gentleman, the deceased, walking very swiftly after him."

Here Frederick Galton put down the newspaper, and sat for a little looking straight before him, with his left hand pressed to his side. Then going to the wash-hand stand, he plunged his face and forehead in cold water, and then, without using the towel, re-seated himself with dripping hair close to the open window, and read on.

"Deceased overtook the first gentleman just as he reached the water's side, and seized him by the collar of his coat. They spoke to one another very fierce indeed; witness could hear that, although he could not hear what was said. He saw the deceased point angrily at something—it seemed to be at the gold thing which held the flowers—and strike the other in the face. Then they grappled together on the edge of the water and fell into it, and fought and struggled, half in and half out of it, sometimes one atop, and sometimes the other; but at last deceased fell undermost altogether, and could not rise again. Then the first young gentleman got up, and shook himself free of the other, and ran off towards the Marble Arch; and witness ran off too among the trees, lest he should get himself into trouble. He had not interfered because it was no concern of his; and also because the gentleman who had given him the food at Epsom seemed to have the best of it all along. It was deceased who attacked the other, and not the other deceased; he had seized him by the collar, and struck him in the face; no blow had passed before that, witness was quite sure. Could not say whether deceased was dead or not when the gentleman left him, but thought not; the latter seemed to have a difficulty in getting away—in releasing himself from the hold of him who was undermost. He did not kneel upon deceased at all, but had his fingers on his throat, as the other had on his. He ran off like one who was terrified at what had been done; his clothes were very wet, of course. Certainly, witness would know him again anywhere, as he knew him then; it was not every gentleman as gave one salad and pie. The reason why he had not given any information to the police until that day was, as he had said before, that he was afraid of getting into trouble himself; and also because he did not want to get the gentleman who had been so kind to him into trouble. He (witness) had confided the whole matter, just as he had now related it, immediately after it had occurred, to a party, who, like himself, was obliged to live a good deal out of doors, and the party had sneaked upon him, and given information to the peelers; that was how he was made to give evidence against his will. He had gone into the country to avoid doing so, but they (the peelers) had tracked him out. He had told the whole truth, with respect to the details of the struggle. He had not exaggerated the violence of the deceased at all, or endeavored to mitigate, out of gratitude, that of the other young gentleman. Witness had nothing more to say, and was sorry to have had to say so much. Hoped that his appearance in that court would not be considered against him; everything *was* against you, as a general rule, with the peelers, no matter what you did."

Park-keeper recalled: "The water was above the body when he first discovered it; and he should say at least two inches over the mouth. Had heard the evidence of last witness. Nothing could have been easier for any man, however exhausted, than to have dragged the body to dry land. To leave a man in such a position was, in his opinion, to commit murder."

"Murder!" "Murder!" How that word—which he had been looking for all along—seemed to repeat itself in Frederick's eyes throughout the next sentence! And why did they begin printing in red ink? How the letters danced and swung before him! What was that the coroner said? A column of words, and over the page nothing but "Murder, murder, murder!"

What did the jury say? That could be read easily enough, at least. The artful printers had done it in phosphorus. It was written in letters of flame:

Wilful murder against some person unknown.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

AS Frederick Galton read the words with which the last chapter closed, the miserable strips of garden and the short parallels of wall upon which he looked, faded from his gaze like a dissolving view, and in their place a thousand windows, filled with eager, cruel faces, seemed to hem him in. The lean, bare gravel too, was alive with them, and on the roofs and even on the chimney pots, they crowded together close, and every eye was on him. As thick as bees they clung, but not so black as such a dense crowd should be. They had been black a moment before; but a shadow had been suddenly withdrawn as it seemed, and then all was light, just as on a great race-course, the human paving of the grand-stand gallery darkens and lightens in a second, as ten thousand faces turn to left and right. But this was no such scene; there was no course, no space—only a vast sheet of white, expectant faces. Ah, he knew what it was now.

In his first days of London life—and had he ever lived anywhere else? Did he seem to know anybody in the world except London people? Was not all that peaceful part of his brief existence in Downshire a mere blissful dream?—In his first few months of his literary apprenticeship, I say, he had made a practice of seeing all the various spectacles which metropolitan life afforded, no matter how few attractions they might possess for him in themselves. Young gentlemen of letters sometimes frequent very questionable places willingly enough, under the pretence that the exigencies of their profession demand that they should make themselves acquainted with every aspect of humanity; and perhaps Frederick Galton had done this. But when, upon a certain occasion, he had gone to the Old Bailey to witness the execution of a fellow-creature, it was certainly not from any love of the horrible. He had not enjoyed that terrible spectacle which the law still now and then gratuitously provides for the rabble after the old Roman fashion. It had filled him with loathing and dismay. He had been unable, even then, to divorce himself from the position of the unhappy criminal. Suppose (he had thought) that it was *I* who am presently to be brought out into that open space yonder, and then to be strangled! suppose that it is for *me*, alive, and desirous of living, that that bell is tolling; that in five minutes from this time the sun and the broad heaven are to be shut out from my gaze forever, and, an outlaw from the world of men, I am suddenly, but not, ah me, not unconsciously cast into the black gulf of death! Even to a brutish man, such a doom is almost always terrible; but to one like Frederick, full of vitality, of youth, of imagination, and capable of, nay, instinct with, spiritual as well as physical fear, how stupendous must be the horrors of such a doom. How wicked, how diabolically cruel, such a fate must seem to him that is about to undergo it—no matter by what crime he may have brought it upon himself—when a word spoken by one man would save him, perhaps even then, or a few lines of writing; and yet nothing is spoken, nothing written, and neither hand nor voice in all that countless throng of his fellow-men is raised in protest. The last sight his eyes will gaze upon, and which he will take with him into eternity, is that of a sea of faces bidding him no God-speed, but if not feasting upon his dying agonies, coldly watching him depart;

exactly as some severe landed proprietor might watch a trespasser "off the premises," and caring not at all, so long as he left them, whither he went.

It was this same scene which now recurred to Frederick Galton's mind with hideous distinctness; there was no gallows, no funereal scaffold, but there was the same countless concourse of inexorable faces all concentrated upon a single point—*himself.* He was about to be hung before them all. At the real execution scene, leaning out of window in the early morning (he had taken with others a room in a house opposite, the night before), and watching the ribald crowd, as it swayed and tossed, he had wondered within himself which of the evil faces spread beneath him would be the first to take the place of him who was about to suffer. It was very probable, nay, almost certain, that one of those forty thousand ruffians would earn for himself the same shameful end; and which, then, would it be?—which? Why, who but he to whom every eye was turned, and every finger was pointed, even *now?* The bell had been tolling this long time, and the people were getting impatient for the show. What was that continued knocking? He had heard it for hours through that night before the hanging, and never did carpenters' work give forth such a direful sound. But why should they knock now? Perhaps they were getting the coffin ready? "Galton, Galton!" Ay, Galton was his name, but what did that matter? he should be a mere bundle of clothes within a few moments.

"Galton, Galton! if you don't open the door, I'll break it in," cried a voice outside the room.

Frederick raised his head from the window-sill, upon which it had fallen—he knew not how long, perhaps hours ago, perhaps only a minute—and slowly gathered himself up. Had he been in a fit, or dreaming? The newspaper was lying on the ground, with the huge black heading of the inquest plainly visible—*that* was no dream, alas! Who was this so importunate to enter, that he threatened to break his way in? Had they found out the murderer already, then? His soul was innocent of all blood-stain; he could not have acted differently, and yet preserved his own life; he had no cause, or scarcely any, so far as this matter was concerned, to fear God, who knew all things; but he had great cause to fear man, who knew nothing, but would suspect much. Why had he not at once given himself up to the police, and explained all, just as it occurred? How vain it was to dream that what had been done would be made known, but not his own share of it! Was it too late to make a clean breast of it even now? Yes; too late by far. Why, the butler in Park street had not only seen him with the bouquet-holder given by Eugenie, but had even offered, as he left the house, to wrap it up for him; Freke, the valet, must have seen it also, and not revealed the fact solely upon his (Frederick's) account. Discovery was certain, and it would not be slow. God help his wife and child! He was not without a plan, however, that might save them from shame, while it saved him from punishment. He knew himself to be a match for most men in sagacity and mental skill. If he could only recover from the mere shock of the misfortune that had overwhelmed him, all might yet be well, or what was well by contrast with what might be. In the mass of inky cloud which, full of storied thunder, overhung the present, there was not a chink of light to be seen; but far off—ever so far away, in the no less threatening horizon—he saw, or thought he saw a slender ray of light. Upon that, henceforth, he must fix his eyes, and never—no, not for one single instant—look to right or left, but only on that ray.

There had been silence for a little without, but now there was the dull sound of metal applied to wood; they were placing a chisel against the lock of the door, or endeavoring to prise it open with a crowbar. Frederick strode swiftly forward, and turned the key.

"Come in," cried he; "I am sorry to have kept you out so long, whoever you are; I have been fast asleep."

Three anxious and excited faces met his own; those of Mrs. Gideon, and of the maid-of-all-work, and the distinguished lineaments, transmitted through so many generations, of Mr. Percival Potts. The first two showed unmistakable signs of disappointment. They had expected a tragedy; they had looked for blood slowly oozing from under the door; and to hear that their queer lodger had been only asleep was a bathos. Mr. Potts's countenance, on the other hand, expressed exceeding relief.

"Upon my word, Galton," said he, "you frightened me not a little. I am truly glad that your wife was taking her walk with the nurse and little master, else she would have been frightened to death."

"Lor, sir, what a turn you gave us!" exclaimed the landlady; "leastways, me and Martha; and nothing to come of it, after all!" her eye wandered round the room in search of traces of gore. "Well, we ought to be thankful for *that*, at all events."

"I am a very sound sleeper," returned Frederick; "you ought to know that, Mrs. Gideon, by this time. Never mind picking up the newspaper, thank you; I rather like a litter. No; you can do nothing more for me; I dare say this gentleman can tell me without your assistance why he took such trouble to wake me."

The landlady and her myrmidon withdrew, and Percival Potts held the door open until he saw them well down-stairs; then closing it, and speaking very slowly and distinctly, he said: "You will have read the account of the inquest on young Meyrick, I suppose?"

"Yes, I have," said Frederick.

He was again looking out of the window. It seemed as if Mrs. Gideon's grove of clothes-props had some strange fascination for himself, for he never withdrew his gaze throughout the subsequent interview.

"The verdict is a most ridiculous one," continued the editor. "I have always contended that the whole jury system is rotten to the core; but such an example of dulness and obstinacy as this"—he touched the newspaper with his foot contemptuously—"has not been given for many a day. Nothing could be clearer than the language of the coroner. The crime, if it could be called a crime, did not certainly go beyond manslaughter—I don't mean to say it was even that—but that should have been the extent of the verdict. If this beggar and outcast was to be depended upon at all—and I confess I think he spoke the truth—the offence committed was Justifiable Homicide; if he invented the story it was Suicide."

"He did not invent the story," said Frederick, quietly.

"I think not," returned the editor; "and everybody will be of that opinion. The fear is"—here, for the first time he ceased to gaze at a tawdry print above the fireplace, and stole a furtive glance at Frederick—"the fear is, that this poor wretch will be credited with knowing more than he has chosen to reveal. He will be thought to have screened the man for whom he entertained such grateful sentiments, and to have given a rose-colored version of his part in the matter. That was what inclined those idiots, contrary to the direction of the coroner, to return a verdict of—to return so strained a verdict. It may, therefore, go very hard with the accused person—very hard, indeed."

There was a knock at the door, and Mrs. Galton entered with her sweet smile.

"How kind of you, dear Mr. Percival Potts" (the editor liked to be called by both these titles, and if he had but had another Christian name, would have most certainly connected them together by a hyphen), "how very kind of you to come and see my husband; I assure you, you are highly honored, for he would not admit even Mr. Johnson into his sanctum yesterday. He has been very unwell, indeed; but I do trust he has turned the corner now. How do you think he is looking?"

"If I am to speak the truth, Mrs. Galton, I think him looking far from well. I had heard bad tidings, and for that reason I came here to-day upon a matter in which I want your warmest advocacy. What your husband needs is an immediate change of air and scene. He has been stived up here in town too long."

"Ah, that is quite true," cried Mary; "now do persuade him of that. And we have just got an invitation down to Casterton. Will it not do him all the good in the world to spend a few weeks upon the breezy downs?"

"That would not be change enough," replied Mr. Potts, positively; "he should leave England altogether, if it would not seriously inconvenience you, Mrs. Galton, and that at once." He spoke with great gravity and earnestness, and Mary answered swiftly: "I am ready to go with him to-morrow—to-night, if he pleases—whereever it is thought best that he should be. All places are alike to me where my husband is."

She spoke with such simple gentleness, that Frederick turned his worn white face towards her for an instant, yearningly.

"*Crede non illam tibi de scelesta.*"

"*Plebe delectam,*" exclaimed the editor, with enthusiasm; "you have got a wife to be proud of, Galton. Forgive me, my dear madam, but I am an old man, and privileged to say what I think."

"I have nothing else to offer him but my love, sir," observed Mary, quietly; "where did you think that he had better go?"

"I have arranged a plan for him to go to Sweden—as our special correspondent," answered the editor. "We have been long in want of such a person at Christiana."

Frederick made an effort to rise from his seat, but his strength seemed to fail him; still keeping his face averted from the other, he held out his hand, and Potts came forward and took it.

"I am very much obliged to you, my friend; very. I shall never forget this."

"A vessel starts to-night—in four hours' time—from London Bridge," said the editor, in his ear; "I have secured accommodation for the nurse and child, as well as for yourselves. To-morrow may be too late."

"Thank you, thank you. God bless you! friend, indeed. But I cannot go."

"Does your wife know?" whispered the other. Frederick shook his head.

"Would she know if she read the inquest?"

"Yes, I think so," was the murmured reply.

"Mrs. Galton," said the editor, solemnly, "leave your husband to me for a few minutes. Take this paper with you to pass the time." Frederick ground his heel upon it, as though he would nail it to the floor, but the other dragged it away, and placed it in her hand. "Read it, true wife; there is bad news in it, and that concerns one beside poor Meyrick; but you will know how to bear it, and when you have read it, come back, and add your voice to mine."

She looked inquiringly towards Frederick, but he did not stir, nor even turn his head. She passed out with the paper in her hand, and went into her own room. Her husband did not know that she had seen him return home that fatal morning with dripping garments, and was aware of his attempt to dry them, or had heard him tell that falsehood about the coffee to Mrs. Gideon, or was cognizant of his putting the stair-clock back—he knew none of the various ways in which he had betrayed himself to her as an evil-doer—but he felt very sure that the mention of the bouquet-holder by the beggar-witness, would instantly bring to her recollection the warning Eugenie had conveyed to him through her unconscious hands, and thereby reveal to her the fatal truth. He well knew, too, that she would never counsel him to fly.

"To-morrow may be too late, Galton," repeated the editor, breaking the painful silence; "think again."

"I *have* thought; I have done nothing else but think, my friend, ever since. At first I could not make up my mind. It was tossed to and fro like some wretched craft in a storm, for which there is no favoring wind, whatever blows, and every coast is rock-girt."

"Poor lad, poor lad!" the sub-editor of the *Porcupine* and sole conductor of the chief government organ, gave ocular evidence—tears—of his being merely human like the rest of us. "But consider, Frederick, my dear boy, we must steer for some port."

"I know that well," groaned Frederick; "but with respect to your kind offer, you have had my answer. I shall stay here. Still, if my wife should side with you, when she has read that paper! 'Ah, 'true wife,' indeed—that was well said! The best on earth, and I have ruined her—her and her child, too. I would cut my right hand off, to be as you are at this moment, friend; unmarried, alone—bearing my own burden of shame and sorrow!"

"But surely, Galton, if she has known nothing of all this before, and learns, for the first time, what is printed in that paper—should her judgment be relied upon to decide a question like this?"

Frederick smiled sadly, but not faintly. "You do not know her yet; she is very brave and very wise: for has not love its logic? Hush! she is coming back again. Let it be 'Yes' or 'No,' according to her voice. Well, dearest, shall we sail for Sweden, or stay here?"

It was well for him that he was not looking at her. There are stories told, almost incredible, of strong men's hair turning gray in one long night of agony, but Mary Galton was scarcely less changed than such in those ten minutes. Her face was colorless, even to her lips. Her saintly eyes, the homes of unutterable wretchedness, seemed to pine within their hollow niches for a tear. Potts, gazing on her with tender pity, trembled for her reason; yet she was never calmer, more self-possessed, more heedful—resolve had never firmer seat than on that little mouth. She put her arms around her husband's neck, and kissed him once, not passionately, but setting, as it were, upon his cheek the seal of her fidelity and love, about to be tried by new and strange ordeals. It was no time "to sicken and to swoon," nor yet for toying. Dânger—death, perhaps, was threatening her beloved. "Let us not sail, my love," whispered she; "let us stay here."

"We stay, my friend," said Frederick; "we do not leave England."

"As you please, Galton," replied the editor, cheerfully. "We must in that case, do what we can on another track. I shall go at once to Griffiths—the man that played Bassanio."

Frederick shook his head, or seemed to do so. Perhaps he only shuddered at some recollection which that name evoked.

"Nay," cried Potts, "if you will not help yourself your friends must help you."

"His friends must help him," observed Mary, quietly. "Who is this Griffiths?"

"A clever lawyer," replied Potts; "a man to trust one's life to before a jury. Money will be wanted, of course; and the *Porcupine* shall be your banker. There will be no difficulty whatever—"

Mary flitted from the room and returned to it before he could finish the sentence, swift, calm, and noiseless as a ghost.

"Here is a cheque for five hundred pounds," said she; "take it, and if more is wanted, it will be forthcoming. I never felt before how precious gold could be."

"I will take it," said the editor, rising, "since you can spare it, and use as much of it as is necessary—Whatever happens, Mrs. Galton—*whatever happens,* do not lose heart—your courage will be tried to the uttermost; but bear up for his sake."

"I shall bear up," said Mary.

"I am sure you will, brave heart! Let me know everything that occurs. You may feel that I am working ceaselessly, since"—he looked towards the silent and motionless form that still resolutely kept its back to them—"since he will not work himself. *Semper constans* has been the motto of the Pottses, madam, for ages."

The editor's last sentence was a vulgar lie. His appearance was far from impressive, or even gentlemanly; his noble sentiments had a very appreciable flavor of whiskey about them, for Mr. Potts could not refrain from imbibing that admirable liquor, even in the daytime. But as he took Mrs. Galton's hand in his, and touched it with his lips, an air of genuine chivalry pervaded him, such as the bearing of no knight of old—no, not that of the "Stainless King" himself—could have excelled.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE TEXT FROM SAMUEL.

MR. PERCIVAL POTTS had truly observed, with reference to his friend's proposed departure, that "to-morrow would be too late." Upon that very evening, just as Frederick had retired to his dressing-room, there came a hybrid knock to the front door, administered by that most intelligent and active officer, Inspector Links. He had none of the paraphernalia of justice about him, save what could be carried in the pocket; but Mary, looking from her window, recognized his errand at a glance. She was in her husband's room and in his arms in an instant. How much there was to say in the mere span of time that was left to them! Ever since the editor had gone they had been incessantly conversing—communing, I should rather call it, for their talk was very earnest and tranquil—and yet it now seemed that they had said nothing. Both had avoided altogether that subject upon which all other tongues were loose, and which affected themselves so nearly. Yet there was something Frederick had meant to tell his wife, procrastinated to this fatal moment, but which it was absolutely necessary that she should know before they parted. This was with reference to the line of defence that he wished his counsel to adopt upon his trial. As he had told his friend he had "done nothing else but think ever since"—that is, from the moment he perceived his error in not having confessed his involuntary share in Meyrick's catastrophe—he had done nothing else but devise schemes for averting its consequences to himself. Of the two plans which had most often occurred to his mind, flight, as we have seen, had been discarded; the other still remained. He had always leaned towards it, and a chance expression of his wife had increased his confidence therein; but he had never told her what it was. It was, indeed, almost impossible to tell her, or to tell any one directly. The difficulty of expressing it, quite as much as the disinclination for the subject to which it belonged, had hitherto kept him silent. And now there was scarcely time for speech at all, however direct, far less for innuendo. Inspector Links, who had nevertheless made no unseemly haste in the matter—since an ally, in plain clothes, was watching "the back," and two, in blue, the front of the little mansion, so that if the mouse were in the trap at all, he was quite safe—Inspector Links, I say, having thrown a passing glance into the parlor, was even now coming upstairs, as though he were the builder whose genius had conceived the edifice, or, at all events, as one who possessed a very accurate plan of its apartments, and had been given a hint with respect to their occupation. He was actually at the threshold of the room marked (in his own mind) as Mr. Frederick Galton's dressing-room, and, hearing voices, he made so bold as to look in.

"I beg your pardon, mum," said he, apologetically, yet keeping his eye fixed upon the object of his visit, and not on the lady; "I have a very unpleasant duty to perform. I think, mum, you had better withdraw."

"What is your business, sir?" inquired Mary. "Anything you have to say to my husband may be spoken before me."

"O, this *is* Mr. Galton, is it?" said the inspector, not without an accent of relief, for it was a case, in his opinion, where a party ought to have "bolted, sharp," and put the seas between him and the possibility of a public expression of censure from twelve of his fellow-countrymen—"then it is my painful errand to make you my prisoner. Shall I mention the charge before the lady?"

"No," said Frederick, hurriedly. "I am ready to accompany you, Mr. Inspector; but please to let me have five minutes' private talk with my wife here; then I shall be quite at your service."

Mingled with shame and wretchedness, there was enough of agonized distraction in Frederick Galton's countenance to excite suspicion in even a less prudent man than the person whom he addressed.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Galton," was his reply, "but the charge against you, as you are doubtless aware, is a most serious one. You will have plenty of opportunities of seeing your wife—subject to the regulations of the—the place whither I am about to convey you; but, upon my own responsibility, I dare not, sir, leave you, either alone or together, with her in private. You can say anything you please to her in my presence; but I warn you to be cautious, if you are about to speak with reference to the crime of which you stand accused, since any admission may be used against you at your trial. If you wish, on the other hand, to speak only of domestic matters, a peace-officer should have no ears in such a case, and you may consider me as not being present."

"You are very kind, sir," said Mary, humbly.

How stupendous seemed this man's power, who could carry off her husband in an instant, before her very eyes;

and how great his mercy since he did not do so, but lent him to her for a few priceless minutes still!

"Bring me our child," whispered Frederick; and Mary ran to fetch him from his cot up-stairs.

The little innocent being of a sprightly nature, and always more ready for caress than sleep, stretched out its arms and clung to its father, in a manner that moved Mr. Links himself.

Then came the parting between the husband and wife, which was silent and terrible. Neither knew exactly when they would meet again, but they both knew—whenever it was—that it would be in Newgate.

"Remember me to all, dearest, who do not forget me in my trouble; and let Bassanio know, to-morrow—do not tell him, but only give him to understand—that I take great comfort from this book." He touched a Bible lying on the table, in which they had been reading together not an hour before.

"Yes, Frederick." There was not a trace of wonder in her face; to the outward eye—or, in other words, to Mr. Inspector Links—she appeared almost too stupefied with sorrow to understand what was said. But, in reality, like Dionysius' chamber, she was all ear; she drank in every syllable like precious drops in drought.

"I have just marked the verse that gives me greatest comfort."

He spoke these words with great distinctness, and very differently from the inarticulate farewell that followed. There was a cab at the door, with some one inside already; Frederick entered and took his seat by the side of this person. The inspector followed, sitting with his back to the horse, which did not make him ill. He could accommodate himself to most situations in life. The vehicle drove off, watched by Mary—the most miserable woman, perhaps, in all wretched London. Yet she shed no tear; she had something else to do than weep. She went up-stairs to Frederick's room—how unspeakably lonely and deserted it had grown within that minute or two—and opened his Bible, in the place where he had folded down the leaf. It was at the twenty-first chapter of the First Book of Samuel, and there was a slight pencil-mark at the thirteenth verse: "And he changed his behavior before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands."

She carefully erased the pencil-mark, and straightened back the leaf. But the words were stereotyped in her own mind from that time forth—and the meaning of the words.

CHAPTER XLV.

FOREWARNED AND FOREARMED.

SERIOUS trouble has an enormous power of attraction. There are some persons connected to us by blood or marriage, whom we never see except at the funerals of one's common relatives. Nothing short of death brings us together at present, but it is probable that if the suspicion of a great crime fell upon ourselves, it would have the same effect. The second-cousin, or the wife's uncle—as the case may be—would hurry up to the scene of action from Cornwall or the depths of Wales, full of interest for the connection who had so unexpectedly become a felon in embryo. The same sympathy might not be manifested after conviction, but while the matter was *in dubio*, even the most distant branches of the family tree would undoubtedly, as the phrase runs, "rally round one." If this would be the effect upon one's wife's uncle, it would, of course, be vastly intensified with one's personal friends. I don't mean to say that all the expressed sympathy would be genuine, nor even that your misfortune might not be a positive satisfaction to some vile minds, but for the most part, it would be well-meant and trustworthy. Even the public at large feels pity for an accused person, and would save him, even if guilty—supposing that there were no particular circumstances to excite their indignation—from the extremity of the punishment which his crime has earned. We may easily imagine, therefore, what pity, as well as amazement, the arrest of Frederick Galton produced among all those persons with whom we have been made acquainted in this history. How the news that Master Frederick was accused of having murdered the young Squire fell upon quiet Casterton, and froze all hearts with horror; how the woe, in which the Grange was already plunged, was deepened by it; how Mr. Tregarthen broke out with an ancestral oath or two, and thanked God, very heartily, that good old Dr. Galton had not lived to see that day; how the crippled pensioner prayed that such things might not be true, and Jacob Lunes tore the lying newspaper in twain that brought it. How Farmer Groves said he could never believe it, but did believe it nevertheless, and took a fearful joy in talking of the matter to all he met. How Mrs. Hartopp fell down like one in a fit when the thing was told her, and never (as was subsequently said with truth) was the same woman again. How the Rev. Robert Morrit received it, none could tell by his outward looks; but if he was stunned, he was not stupefied, for he instantly wrote a business-letter respecting the transference of his clerical duties for an indefinite period, and putting his cheque-book in his pocket, came up forthwith to Somers Town. How the news broadened on to Oldborough, and darkened the shadow of the limes upon the cottage, and blanched the widow's russet cheek, and palsied for a moment even the quick intelligence of Jane Perling; yet, scarce a tremulous word was spoken ere her nimble fingers were busy packing up such things as were needful, and Mary had her mother and sister Jane to bide with her in her great trouble before the next morning dawned. How it flashed down to Camford, where the memory of the brilliant Frenchman was still alive, and the disgrace of Meyrick had not ceased to be a topic for talk at Undergraduate "wines." How the dreary old dons, in combination rooms, snapped at the subject like sharks who, after a long fish-diet, share amongst them a plump sailor-boy. How this and that bright saying of Frederick's in his palmy time was repeated and greedily listened to; and how all that had known him, however slightly, including the old porter at Minim Hall, found themselves suddenly lions. How Mrs. Hermann clasped her hands, and trembled to think how she had once harbored a murderer, or, at all events, had showed him great hospitality, and that at a considerable expense; and how the good doctor rebuked her, in a manner altogether beyond experience, and shut himself up in his own study to mourn over the lad, who was even as the apple of his own eye, and had altogether usurped the place of the Greek particles in his heart's affections.

Nor was the excitement less in London itself, where, if Frederick Galton had few old friends, he had many new ones, ready enough to acknowledge the intimacy with him, at a time when each acknowledgment could be exchanged for an invitation to dinner. The dowager Lady Ackers had forbidden the painful subject to be alluded to in her presence, connected as she unhappily was by friendship with the family of the victim, and by acquaintanceship with the accused himself; but Sir Geoffrey, on the contrary, was a strong partisan of the latter, touched by the remembrance of their college days, and partly, perhaps, by the consciousness that he had behaved somewhat harshly to Frederick in the matter of that visit to his intended in Grosvenor Square. "The poor young fellow had been half out of his mind all along," said he, "and should not be judged like some folks. Every man who knew him at Camford used to call him Mad Galton. Why, he was stark mad to have married as he did. It was ridiculous to put a fellow like that in Newgate, and try him for murder." We have seen how Percival Potts was bestirring himself loyally for the man who had been once his enemy, and we may be sure that Mr. Jonathan Johnson was not behind-hand in good offices. Both gentlemen had seen the bouquet-holder in Frederick's hand when they parted from him in Park Lane that eventful morning, and so soon as they knew where it had been found, they communicated to one another their suspicions. Neither had attributed to Frederick a worse part in the sad catastrophe than he had really taken; their sagacity had in fact possessed them of the precise circumstances of the case, even before the coroner's inquest; but a jury, as they were well aware, would not be composed of such men as they, whose own judgment, moreover, would doubtless have been less lenient, had they not known their man. They trembled for the result of a trial. They had suggested flight—for the proposal had come from their united counsels—not because they feared that the verdict of wilful murder, or anything nearly so serious, would be maintained in a criminal court, but because they felt that Frederick Galton would be incapable of enduring any punishment, however slight, which might be accorded to a felon. They knew that a sensitive nature like his must needs break down under it, and that if he survived it even, he would never be fit for anything afterwards. The law, in imposing imprisonment as the penalty of his offence, would, in fact, be awarding death, or at all events, utter ruin. When, therefore, Frederick Galton firmly declined to take advantage of the offer of a passage to Sweden, Mr. Potts had returned to Mr. Johnson's quarters greatly crestfallen.

"My opinion is that nothing can save the poor lad now, Johnson. Whatever he gets from the judge, will drive him mad. If you had only seen him as I have just seen him—silent, shrinking, haggard—you would almost have thought he was mad already."

Mr. Jonathan Johnson held up his finger, as if to ask for a little time for thought; then after a long pause, placing it upon the other's sleeve, he whispered earnestly:

"Don't you think that it might be proved in court that he has been ma—ma—mad *all along?*"

Upon this text the two editors held close discourse for more than an hour, after which, late as it was, they went off together in a Hansom cab to the residence of that eminent attorney, Mr. Clene Hans. This immaculate gentleman, being put in possession of the result of their deliberations, at first did nothing but shake his head, and utter the two monosyllables, "Won't do, won't do;" but eventually, the matter being more fully set before him in all its bearings, he condescended to observe that the idea might be valuable, and should have his best attention. So valuable, indeed, did Mr. Clene Hans consider it, that immediately after breakfast next morning he set out for Mr. Griffiths' chambers, with a whole plan of operations born of the said idea, mapped out in his subtle brain, ready to lay before that gentleman. It would have been difficult for the present writer, not being of the legal profession, to describe the delicate and cautious methods by which the sagacious attorney would have approached the subject in hand—would have broken to his counsel the rather startling proposition of defending from the charge of wilful murder upon the plea of insanity, a client whom both probably believed to be sane; but Mr. Griffiths himself relieved the attorney (and with him myself) from his somewhat embarrassing position, by remarking at the outset, that he owed Mr. Clene Hans an apology for having done a somewhat unprofessional thing that morning, since, without attorney intervention, he had received instructions concerning that unhappy case of Mr. Frederick Galton's. In point of fact Mrs. Galton herself had left him only a few minutes ago after a protracted interview; and he was happy to say—here Mr. Griffiths, who was nursing his knee after the usual chamber-practice fashion, got immensely interested in the toe of his elevated boot. Yes, he was truly gratified to say that the case might be divested of its criminal aspect—its more painful features upon the ground of—

"It seems from what his friends, Messrs. Potts and Johnson, were telling me last night," said the attorney, filling up an awkward pause, "that the poor fellow is as mad as a March hare."

"Just so," said the barrister, letting his leg down for the first time, "our plea is insanity. I met him myself curiously enough on the very night of the occurrence at this Meyrick's own house, and he seemed to be a strange fish—very. He has had the sense to marry an excellent wife, however, and yet I have heard that there was something queer even about that."

"It is a pity we cannot *subpœna you*, Mr. Griffiths," observed the attorney, slyly; "Johnson and Potts will both give strongish evidence, I should think."

"Very good," replied Mr. Griffiths; "here's a long list of witnesses to be written to. That woman's head is straight upon *her* shoulders, whether her husband's is turned or not; she was as quiet and collected as you are. We must get Dr. Beebonnet or Dr. Crotchet to see the poor fellow in Newgate; the medical evidence will be of vast importance."

"We had better have them both," remarked the attorney. "The more 'Experts' we have the—eh?" Mr. Clene Hans finished his sentence with an expressive twinkle of his eye.

"Certainly," returned the barrister, with an answering smile. "I should recommend ten instead of two, if it was not all-important to keep our line of defence as dark as possible."

Mr. Griffiths was well aware—perhaps even from personal experience—how easy it is for men to fully persuade themselves of anything which is in accordance with their own interests; there is a still less difficult task when, instead of interest, some softer passion, such as friendship, love, or even pity, inclines us to accept an idea; for in that case, confident that we are actuated by no selfish motive, we immediately fall a prey to our own good impulses. Hence, let it not be imagined, because such of Frederick

Galton's friends, as it was thought desirable to communicate with upon the subject, all more or less fell into the new theory as to the unsound state of his mind, that they did anything dishonest in so doing.

Did you ever have any reason to suppose, from anything Mr. Frederick Galton has said or done, that he was laboring under mental aberration? Have his opinions been always consonant with those of a sane mind? Has not his behavior, within your own knowledge, been often *outré* and extravagant? Have you ever heard it remarked by others that he was strange and eccentric to an extraordinary degree? Have you ever made a remark to this effect yourself, and if so to whom? etc., etc.

These are questions which, being put to our friends even in a careless manner respecting our own selves, would not be answered upon the instant. They would most of them pause a little, and perhaps even admit that now they began to think about it, there had certainly been always something strange about us, and which had been very unaccountable to them. If these inquiries, the object of them being unknown, were headed *Private*, and emanated from a legal firm, nine-tenths of the respondents would decline to commit themselves to any opinion upon so very open a question as that of our being mad or sane. But if the avowed intention was to save us from the gallows, the suspicion always existing as to the unhappy state of our mind would be found to have been almost universal among those who knew (and loved) us best. We must have had quite a specialty for the commonplace if a hundred acts which we have done in our lives did not bear a very eccentric appearance from *that* point of view. It would not much signify what particular crime we committed—except that the worse it was the better—for we should always find a score of honest people to protest that it was nothing more than they had expected all along.

By the week's end, Mr. Clene Hans was in the possession of such testimony as made him believe in the insanity of his unfortunate client quite as firmly as he believed in anything else; and Mr. Griffiths, thanks to repeated interviews with Mrs. Galton, had accomplished the same mental feat within even a less period. The kink in the cable which was otherwise running smoothly out to the satisfaction of all concerned, occurred, as it often does, exactly where nothing of the kind was apprehended—namely, with respect to the medical evidence. Mr. Clene Hans had been unwise in engaging two such very distinguished authorities as Drs. Beebonnet and Crotchet. Either of them would have done his work admirably alone, or in conjunction with one too insignificant to be a rival; but their reputations as mad doctors were too European to admit of their acting in unison. Each had his theory, in defence of which he would have gone to the scaffold, or, at all events, as in the present case, would have cheerfully let another man go there, rather than give it up. They had each written a book upon *Dementia Adventitia*, out of either of which nineteen-twentieths of the human race could be proved to be eligible for Hanwell; but they differed upon the vital question of how people ought to go mad. There is a right way and a wrong way of doing everything, and whether Frederick Galton fulfilled all the proper conditions in taking leave of his senses was the question in point. Of course he did not himself allow that he was mad—no really mad person ever does that; and no sane person of intelligence who thinks of pretending to be mad would ever dream of doing it. He would be an audacious impostor, indeed, who would counterfeit Mad Tom to the life. The pantomime of the Insane is perfect, each passion being imitated by unmistakable signs; and even if this could be satisfactorily parodied, it would require the vigilance of Argus to subdue every impulse, to fetter every mobile feature, and to hush every syllable upon the lips which Nature—who is sane above all things—suggests continually even to the most habitual dissembler. There were a thousand circumstances attendant upon his position quite sufficient to make poor Frederick Galton appear very different from the rest of his fellow-creatures. He had genuine fits of frenzy when there seemed nothing for it but to dash his head against the prison walls, and so to end life and shame together; but generally he was sullen and passive, which was the very best thing, for the object he had in view, which he could do. Still, Dr. Crotchet had doubts, principally because Dr. Beebonnet had none, and was understood to disbelieve in the *bonâ fide* character of their patient's or client's supposed madness. It would be very awkward to have to put the latter gentleman in the witness-box alone, and to be compelled to admit in cross-examination that their other expert had leaned to the side of the prosecution. Yet there was only one more interview to be held between the doctors and the accused. Mr. Clene Hans would have given fifty pounds to have been able to prove *dementia naturalis*, against Crotchet himself. "Obstinate old idiot" was, indeed, the very expression which he privately applied to him.

It seemed as if even Mary Galton, who was "moving Heaven and earth" for her husband's good, could be of no possible use in such a hitch as this; nor could she have been but for the following circumstance. Having permission to see her husband every day, although never without the presence of some attendant, she had taken the fullest advantage of that privilege. On a certain afternoon, while on her way towards Newgate as usual with her mother (who waited for her outside the prison, but could never be induced to go inside), a little ragged boy brushed by her, and as he did so, put a letter in her hand. They were on the wrong side of a crossing at the moment, and widow Perling's mind was far too deeply occupied with the perils of the way before them to have any eyes except for the vehicles, each of which was to her as a car of Juggernaut. The note was written in pencil upon the leaf of a pocket-book, and ran thus: "I must see you, Mary dear, before you see your husband this day, and in private. I am following you now.

"EUGENIE."

"Mother," said Mary, holding up this scrap of paper, "I have just got news telling me I must go on alone. I will see you safely into a cab, but I must go by myself to-day."

A few weeks back, Mrs. Perling would never have consented to leave her daughter thus in the crowded streets; but their relative positions were now reversed. It seemed as if Mary was competent to take care of anybody, including her sweet self.

"You know best, dear," returned the old lady, simply, and submitted to be placed in a four-wheel as unresistingly as luggage.

Then Mary looked back, but only saw a number of strangers of her own sex crowding around the window of a fashion-shop. She did not recognize, at first, the graceful form of Eugenie in widow's weeds.

The two women wrung one another's hands without a word. Then, "Where can we go to be alone?" said Mrs. Meyrick. "I have something to tell you that must be told at once."

There are not many places in London where ladies can step in together and converse in private. The only place of refuge that offered itself to these two was a pastry-cook's shop. There—sitting at a small smeared table before a couple of little basins of untouched soup, and surrounded by a crowd of economical, genteel females, come up from the suburbs for a day's shopping in town, and partaking of their midday meal—the widow of the slain and the wife of the slayer held their talk. Few scenes could have been more incongruous with such a meeting; and yet, perhaps, neither of them knew that they were otherwise than alone.

"How is Monsieur de Lernay?" inquired Mary.

"My father is dying," returned the other, shuddering. "Let us not talk of that. I am come to speak of the living, for whom there is yet hope. Listen. I was in the city this morning, upon business connected with our removal to Lozere. His native air is recommended to my poor father, though I doubt whether he will live to breathe it. I was caught in that storm this morning, and got into an omnibus—I am humble enough, dear Mary, now, and no longer rich—and next to me there sat two gentlemen, whose names I do not know even now, but they are known to *you*. They spoke in French, because the omnibus was full of people, and they did not wish what they said to be overheard. It seemed that they were doctors, and had been upon a professional visit, to determine the sanity, or otherwise, of a certain person lying under accusation in jail. They could not agree upon the matter; but their arguments were so technical and scientific, that I could scarcely understand them. One thought that he could advocate the plea of insanity, and the other thought that he could not; but both agreed that they should be greatly influenced by the success, or otherwise, of a certain stratagem which they had planned that day. You comprehend me, Mary dear?"

"A glass of sherry, ladies?" inquired a female attendant, leaning over them confidentially. "Ladies often take a glass of sherry after a journey. I trust that the soup is to your liking."

"The soup is excellent," replied Eugenie, quietly. "Bring two glasses of sherry, if you please."

The sherry was brought, and thereby freedom from interruption purchased.

"The stratagem was this, Mary. They affected, this morning, to be both convinced of his being really mad. 'These fits of frenzy,' said they to some third person—the governor of the jail, I think—but so as to be just within the prisoner's hearing; 'these paroxysms are quite conclusive; the one thing that strikes us as unnatural is, that they only take place in the daytime. The true lunatic is almost invariably as violent at night as day.' The doctors are convinced that the prisoner overheard them, and did so furtively; whether with a mere madman's cunning, or with the intention of making use of the information, remains to be seen. If he passes to-night quietly, it will be well for him; but if he behaves otherwise than usual, he will be set down as an impostor. You understand me, Mary?"

Ay, she understood her. She would have taken the slightest hint—have filled up all that was wanting in the merest skeleton of suggestion upon such a subject. The thought that struck her brain, and flushed her cheek, and kept her silent when she should have answered, was one of shame. How mean, how contemptible were these deceptions, notwithstanding the necessity that compelled them! She did not feel them upon her own account, but upon Frederick's. How frank and open had his nature always been! How scornful even of conventionalities, far more of deceit! How genuine and bright and free! When she had said "Let us not leave England," it was because she feared what falsehood, what exaggerations, what shameful things might be said against him as a fugitive. His honor seemed, then, almost as dear to her as his life. Perhaps, too, convinced that he was incapable of actual crime, she had persuaded herself that his innocence, so far, at all events, as intention went, would be established at his trial. How impossible would it have then appeared to her that he could ever have been placed in such a position as the present—he, her generous, high-souled, open-hearted husband, to be playing the hypocrite in yonder jail, to save himself from a felon's fate!

"Do you understand, Mary dear?" repeated Eugenie.

"I understand," answered she. "How good it was of you, in your great trouble, to hasten thus—"

"Do not speak of that, Mary; my trouble is heavy, but it is light, light as a feather compared with yours; and I have been the cause of yours—yes, partly, Mary—although, God knows, the unwilling cause. I gave that bouquet to Mr. Galton to give to you, which my wretched husband imagined was for himself. He should never have been my husband, Mary; never, never. That is my crime, and from it all this misery has come. I would that I could bear it all myself. I am not punished as I deserve, Mary, as you are not rewarded. Do not look upon me so pitifully, for I have not earned your pity. Moreover, I am not so unhappy as I have been, except for that one terror that wrings your heart. If all goes well, as it is believed it will, you will have him soon again, Mary; I am telling you no untruth, be sure; and when that has happened, I shall be happy; yes, by contrast, happy. When my father—when I am left quite alone, there is a religious house near Florac, in Lozere, which will receive me. Do not fear; it is not a convent, where no news can come from those we love; but a home fit for an erring soul like mine, that cannot give itself wholly up to God even now. My sister, whom your brother saved, is buried there. Kiss me, Mary. Tell him—though he will know it well—that I can read his soul, how pure it is of this foul stain. I must never see him more in this world; but if death spares me—and death is very cruel, taking away those to whom life is dear, and leaving such as I—I trust we two shall meet again!"

"I trust so too, dear Eugenie; God grant it may be upon a time less wretched than this in which we part."

CHAPTER XLVI.

PUBLICITY.

IT is a just boast among persons of the literary profession, that not one of their respectable order has ever been hung. The mind at once, of course, reverts to Dr. Dodd; but he was a clergyman, and applied himself solely to the production of theological works. I do not advance the monstrous proposition that no writer ever did or does deserve to be hung. There was Mr. W., for instance, an agreeable periodical humorist—he used to write in the *London Magazine*, under a *nom de plume*—and who murdered at least six persons, mostly females. But then he was not tried for wilful murder. He suffered transportation at the hands of five insurance companies, which had declined to reward the forethought wherewith he had provided for the possible demise of his victims. The rarity of even such a secondary offence as fraud in a professor of literature aroused an immense interest in this gentleman's fate. His works, which, between ourselves, were nothing remarkable, were greatly sought after in consequence, and all the people that had ever dined in his company—at Holland House and elsewhere—achieved social successes so long as the excitement lasted. Yet Mr. W.'s misfortune never affected the general public nearly so much as did that of Mr. Frederick Galton. The circulation of the *Porcupine*, ten times that of the *London Magazine* in its best days, was more than doubled by the calamity of its young contributor. The *Daily Democrat* promised to its subscribers a supplement that should be solely confined to the report of his trial. The illustrated papers despatched their artists "special" down to Casterton, and Leckhamsley Round attained quite a Metropolitan reputation. There was wood enough consumed in "cuts" of poor Dr. Galton's homely mansion to have built a gallows-tree for his unhappy son. A *carte de visite* of Mrs. Hartopp, as she sat with her back to the window of the housekeeper's room—she never stirred out now—was obtained by an enterprising photographer, and had a wonderful sale at two-and-six.

All the correspondents of the cheap press found themselves in exclusive possession of particulars concerning the Galton family. The fact of the existence of Minim Hall began to be noised abroad for the first time, and gave the neatest occasion to the *Democrat* for a pyrotechnical exposition of university abuses and shortcomings. The circumstances of the living of Casterton being sequestered (as poor Mr. Morrit used to call it), did not, on that account, escape observation, but the reverse; and the "interim incumbent and uncle of the accused," made a very prominent figure in the indictment. The Home Secretary was harassed night and day, for admission to a private interview with the prisoner by a man who was commissioned to model him in wax for the Room of Horrors.

Conceive how terrible were all these things, or even the echoes of them, to those who really loved poor Frederick! How he himself imagined them all in his solitary cell, and gnashed his teeth with anguish. How Mr. Morrit's nature shrank from them as from some physical blow, notwithstanding his utter scorn for those from whom they emanated. He was not a man to take that sort of morose pleasure which some men do in undergoing the consequences of their own errors; the cup of bitterness had no expiatory attraction for him, but was drained with shuddering and repugnance. And yet he owned that he was much to blame for what had happened. Had he made his nephew such an allowance as was suitable from the first, the Galtons and the Meyricks would have stood upon the same social level, or nearly so, and would have been intimate or not, according to circumstances. There would have been no mad jealousy engendered in John Meyrick's brain, or, at least, it would not have been brought to the bitter birth by that secret visit of Eugenie to Somers Town; or, if the curate did not guess so much as that, he knew that but for him Mary would have been a guest at M. de Lernay's upon that fatal night, as well as her husband, when no mischief could possibly have occurred. Now, however, it seemed as if Mr. Morrit could never do enough to express his sorrow for the past, not only in the way of pecuniary expenditure, personal exertions, and the like, but what was really some sacrifice to him still, in the self-abnegation of all family pride and social superiority.

He had always had a genuine respect for widow Perling and her daughter, even when their existence had been most obnoxious to him, and their common misfortune now knit the three together in its loving bond. To Mary he was always making some practical apology for his former treatment of her, in delicate and thoughtful service. Any shyness or embarrassment which the poor girl might have experienced in the sudden change of her relations with the curate, was rendered impossible by the circumstances of the case; the vastness of her trouble swallowed up all minor things, and she accepted the homage of this rebel knight quite naturally, as though he had never borne arms against her cause, or refused to pay her due allegiance. It was touching to remark how he strove to keep out of the sight and hearing of the little family all evidence of the publicity attaching to Frederick's condition, although he might have spared his pains; first because nothing could stop the tongue of Mrs. Gideon; and secondly, because the three in question cared less about what the world was saying than the world could possibly have guessed. The thoughts of widow Perling and Jane were occupied wholly with prayers and fears for their beloved Mary, upon whom such unparalleled woe had fallen in God's inscrutable wisdom; and the mind of Mary herself never strayed for one single instant from the great problem of "How was Frederick's life to be saved?" The time had now arrived for this to be solved.

CHAPTER XLVII.

FOR THE PROSECUTION.

SELDOM had that squalid space in front of the Old Bailey been filled by such a fashionable throng as pressed about it on the morning of the trial of Frederick Galton; one would have thought, by the stream of carriages, that Her Majesty's servants had temporarily transferred themselves during alterations in the Haymarket, to Justice Hall, and were giving a morning performance there. Tickets of admission to the court were sought after as though they had been passports to Paradise, and many a Peri—for so "interesting" a case attracted numbers of the softer sex—besieged that Eden gate—opening from the ghastly courtyard wherein the scaffold is housed—and went away disconsolate, since tears themselves could not avail them.

"The court 'olds five 'undred to 'ear, and eight 'undred to suffocate, and the eight 'undred is already there," was the grim rejoinder of the doorkeeper to all entreaties. "Why, no wonder," he added, "as 'ow this 'ere place is called the pressyard," a professional *jeu d' esprit,* which earned for him in that appreciative neighborhood the reputation of a joker for life. Those persons, on the other hand, who would far rather have been anywhere else than in that hall of doom, were obliged to be present as witnesses. Mary herself, too, was there, breathless, but firm, behind her thick crape veil, and sister Jane sat beside her, pale and trembling. Frederick Galton was pale enough, but he did not tremble, and when the indictment, with its terrible words was read, he pleaded "Not guilty" in low but steady tones.

Mr. Creeps, Q.C., opened the case for the prosecution with his usual impressiveness. He stated that it was totally unnecessary for him to advert to the painful interest which the circumstances upon which he was about to dwell had excited in the public mind, to the position which the accused had held in society, and to the place he had occupied, notwithstanding his extreme youth, in the literature of the day. It was an immense relief to him (the learned counsel) that at least it did not devolve upon him to lay to the charge of the prisoner at the bar the foul crime of wilful murder; the prosecution had decided that there were no grounds for pressing that accusation. It would have been a terrible thing, he owned, to have had to fix upon a fellow-creature, so young, so favored by nature herself to please the eye, the mind, and the heart—it would have been a dreadful mission, indeed, he repeated, to have had to press against such an individual an accusation which, if proved, must have resulted in his execution in front of yonder prison. Yet, if he *had* been so instructed, that mission must have been fulfilled; and now, when he had still to urge a very weighty accusation against this unhappy youth—the crime of manslaughter—he intended to discharge his duty, painful as it was; and he most solemnly warned the jury there impanelled in defence of the dearest interests of society, to do their duty too, and not to be swayed by sympathy or sentiment, which, however natural and even creditable to them in other situations, would, in their present position as jurymen, be at once pernicious and criminal.

It had never, alas! been his lot to conduct a case more conclusive than the one now confided to his charge. The chain of evidence was unbroken throughout, and led directly to the prisoner at the bar. Almost always, in similar cases, the testimony was of a more or less circumstantial kind, but in the present a witness would be brought forward, who, himself unseen, had actually beheld with his own eyes the struggle which had resulted in the death of the deceased at the hands of the accused person. Under such circumstances, there was no need that any "motive" for commission of the crime should be established against the prisoner; he should therefore not enlarge upon the painful fact that the deceased and the accused had once been intimate, but had of late been upon the worst of terms with one another; and moreover, whether rightly or wrongly, that the deceased entertained the gravest suspicions of the conduct of the prisoner with relation to his (the deceased's) wife. His learned friend, he perceived, was about to take exception to this statement; but when he added that Mrs. Meyrick herself, the widow of the deceased, would presently be called in corroboration—not, indeed, of the reasonableness of those suspicions, but of the fact of their existence—he concluded that his learned friend would consider silence to be his better course. Finally, he was not in a position to anticipate the defence that would be set up in the prisoner's behalf by his learned friend; but if that defence was (as it was whispered to be) that he was not responsible for his actions, then the jury must be well persuaded, before admitting such an audacious—considering all the circumstances, he had almost said such a desperate plea, that the prisoner was laboring from such a defect of reason as not to know the nature of the act he was committing; or if he did know it, that he was not aware that he was doing wrong.

After stating the main facts of the case, of which, like everybody in the court, we are ourselves aware, Mr. Creeps proceeded to call the identical witnesses who had given evidence before the coroner's jury. The only one of these to whom any questions were put in cross-examination was the homeless beggar. He had been supplied with somewhat more decent garments than he wore upon his appearance before the coroner—for otherwise, it would have been necessary that all the beauty and fashion should have left the court—but his countenance was not at all less haggard, though his clothes were less ragged, nor his behavior less like that of a hunted criminal. The judge, the police, the jury, the barristers, the attorneys, were to him only different species of a race whose hand had been ever against his own, and not seldom twisted in his neck-cloth, from the gutter which had been his cradle, until now. He glared upon them with mingled ferocity and wonder; he felt himself in a false position; with the dock he was familiar enough, but the witness-box was altogether a novelty to him. He seemed to think every question was directed to trip *him* up, to establish the fact that it was high time that he should be marched off and put into prison uniform, and fed through a hole in a cell door, as usual. He had been out of jail for nearly six months.

If the intention of Mr. Griffiths had been to show that his client had not committed the deed laid to his charge, here was an admirable opportunity. Here was a witness whom it would have been the easiest work in the world to turn inside out; but that not being the learned counsel's object, he resisted the temptation, notwithstanding that his forensic mouth watered to do it, and only manipulated the poor fellow a little to see how he would mould. His observant eye had detected a change in the beggar's glance when, wandering from one part of the court to the other, like a frightened bird that seeks an outlet, it had fallen upon Frederick Galton. This man was then at all events favorable to his client's cause. "My good man," observed Mr. Griffiths, when the poor wretch had finished his evidence, "when you first saw from your resting-place behind the tree, the prisoner at the bar come across the park, did you observe anything peculiar in his manner?"

"My good man" dropped his eyes a moment, like one who is used to look for inspiration from beneath rather than from above, and responded curtly: "Well, yes, I did, sir."

"Ah, you did, did you? Now please to tell the court how the prisoner looked—how he behaved himself."

"Well, he come very slow, and every now and then he stop, and mumbled at the nosegay as he 'eld in his 'and. Then he would take off his 'at, and the hair would blow back his 'air like the picture over the Hangel at 'Ampton; and he talked as though there was somebody by, the likes of which I never see before, unless when a cove's asleep. Then, when the other party come up all of a sudden and grabbed at his throat, I thought this party would have gone right off--he looked so scared."

"You mean that you thought he would have fainted."

"Ay, just so. I should think he jumped a foot or two in the hair. Then the other party loosed his 'old to snatch at the flowers, and this here chap he wouldn't give them up, and to it they went;" here Mr. Griffiths indulged in a premonitory cough, and the witness did not conclude his sentence with "'ammer and tongs," as he had intended.

"Very good; we know all that, my good man; but when the contest terminated, how did the prisoner behave then? You have seen a good many 'rough and tumbles' in your life, my friend, I dare say; now how did he behave—of course, he would be excited under such circumstances—but did he behave as a person who has gained the upper hand in such a conflict generally does behave?"

"Certainly not, sir; he behaved more like a fool in my judgment. Instead of sticking atop o' the other chap and keeping his 'ed well under water, he got away from him directly he felt hisself was loose, and ran away across the park, all wet and drippin', and his eyes half out of his 'ed, for all the world like a mad fellow."

Re-examined by Mr. Creeps as to whether the mumbling at the nosegay "was not, in point of fact, simply kissing it;" "my good man" replied that it was not.

The footman of the deceased deposed to the fact that Mr. Frederick Galton left his master's house a little after daybreak upon the morning in question, with a bouquet in his possession.

He could not favor Mr. Creeps with the information as to whether it was his mistress's bouquet or not. He did not know as to the bouquet-holder. The prisoner was not carrying the bouquet in his hand, but in his pocket. As far as witness knew, it was customary to carry bouquets in the hand only.

Cross-examined by Mr. Griffiths.—The flowers were peeping out of the front pocket of the prisoner's summer coat. There was no attempt to conceal their presence there—certainly not. The prisoner was very much excited, indeed; yes, extraordinarily so; quite out of himself, as one might say.

Re-examined by Mr. Creeps.—M. de Lernay, the father-in-law of deceased, had been seized with paralysis during supper, less than an hour before, and in the presence of the prisoner. That was not sufficient in his (the witness's) opinion to produce extraordinary excitement.

"Call Eugenie Meyrick," said Mr. Creeps. At the mention of this name there was what the French call "agitation" in the court. Silken garments rustled everywhere as their wearers turned themselves towards the witness for a long and steady inspection of the deportment of their sister under her grievous trouble. All had heard of her; many had seen her, the brightest ornament of a brilliant scene; some had even taken her hand and smiled their thanks as they departed from her own roof after "a delightful evening." The Bar, who had their speculations as to what Creeps could make of her, ceased to make-believe to be studying their own briefs, and left off drawing caricatures of the "good man" self-appropriated by Mr. Griffiths, in order to concentrate their attention upon the fascinating and fashionable widow. Even the judge settled his gold spectacles upon the ridge of his nose with greater solicitude than usual, so that no necessity for alteration in that important particular might presently withdraw his attention from the coming witness.

"May we ask you to raise your veil, madam?" observed Mr. Creeps, assuming an expression of great blandness. To some hearts within the court he seemed to speak like a surgeon who requests that the patient should bare his limb as a preliminary to amputation; but to the majority his request afforded unmitigated satisfaction. It might, of course, have been desirable that the jury should see her features, but half the attraction of the show would have been lost did not the spectators see them too.

Eugenie had never looked so beautiful; and yet so woful, that the man must have had a hard heart who regarded her beauty rather than her woe.

"You are the widow of the deceased John Meyrick—are you not, madam?"

"I am." Her voice was low, but could be heard to the utmost extremity of the court as plainly as that of the crier.

"How long have you known the prisoner at the bar?"

"About two years."

"You knew him when he was at college, did you not?"

"I did."

"You met him occasionally at dinners, picnics, and the like; and he sometimes came to your own house, and spent a morning or an afternoon with you alone?"

"I met him several times at the table of Dr. Hermann, the principal of his college. I have been at water-parties in his company, perhaps, half-a-dozen times. He has passed several mornings, and, doubtless, several afternoons, at my father's invitation, in our house, and sometimes my father was not present."

"Upon your engagement with your late husband, the prisoner's visits, however, and, in fact, his intimacy with you altogether, were discontinued?"

"At the time of my engagement Mr. Galton left the university, and came to reside in London."

"Did he leave in consequence of your engagement?"

"Certainly not."

"Previous to your acquaintanceship with the prisoner, were the deceased and he on terms of intimate friendship?"

"They had, I believe, been playfellows together as boys. I do not think they were ever what could be called friends."

"Why not?"

"Their dispositions and pursuits were totally different."

"You think, perhaps, that there was too great an inequality of merit between them?"

"I do."

"And that the superiority did not lie upon the side of your husband?"

The witness did not reply.

"At all events, their intimacy, whether it was friendship or not, ceased altogether when you became engaged?"

"It had ceased before."

"But not before they had both known you?"

"I am not sure, but I think not."

"After your marriage, your husband often expressed himself in violent terms against the prisoner—in a word, whether with or without cause, he was jealous?"

"He was jealous without cause."

"Unknown to your husband you one day went to Somers Town, I believe?"

"I did.

"In order to see the prisoner?"

"No; I went to see his wife."

"Had you been previously a friend of Mrs. Galton's?"

"No."

"Had you ever seen her before in all your life?"

"No."

"Then what induced you to undertake an expedition which you could not but be aware would be displeasing to your husband, to visit a person with whom you had no previous acquaintance?"

"I decline to state."

Sensation in court, during which Mr. Creeps consulted with his attorney.

"I shall not press the question, madam, although I have full power to do so—unless, indeed, by the answer, you must needs have criminated yourself. Well, although you did not go to Somers Town with the intention of seeing the prisoner at the bar, you *did* see him, did you not?"

"I did see him."

"He afterwards walked with you a portion of the way home, I think?"

"He did."

"Was your husband ever aware of this visit of yours?"

"I cannot say." The witness added, with effort: "To the best of my belief he had made himself aware of it."

"You did not tell him yourself, however, at all events?"

"I never exchanged a word with him from the time of that occurrence until his death."

"What! you went to Somers Town on the 17th of June; your husband returns home that night, or the next morning—"

"He is brought home intoxicated," observed the judge, referring to his notes.

"Very true, my lud—thank you, my lud—but is it possible, madam, that, although in his dressing-room, which adjoins your own apartment, the whole of that next day, you never even addressed one another?"

"We never *saw* one another at all."

"He was then so transported with rage and jealousy —doubtless exaggerated by drink—that he would not even speak to you; nor would he take part in the festivities which were being held in his own house upon the evening in question?"

Eugenie made no reply.

"Is it not true, madam, that his feelings had been so excited as even to cause him—during the very period in which these festivities were occurring—to attempt, or at least to make preparations for attempting, self-destruction?"

"No."

"But we have it in evidence. Your own maid has deposed to the fact, that a silken rope, with a slip-knot in it—a bell-rope from your own room, I think it was—was found coiled under his pillow, upon the very bed where he had been lying so long. Do you mean to tell me that he had not intended to use that rope for the purpose of suicide?"

"Yes."

"Why, what else could he have proposed to do with it?"

She had sworn to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. If she did so, her reply would be: "I believe that my husband intended, with that rope, to strangle not himself, but me." Yet, what good could such a declaration effect for anybody? and what incalculable pain—if it was believed at all—would it produce in the rude but honest old squire at Casterton, and in that childless mother, for whom John Meyrick himself had kept one sound spot to the last in his corrupted heart? Perhaps, too, respect for that great city of refuge, Death, to which the poor wretch had fled, bade her spare his memory.

"I incline to the belief," said she, "that my late husband rather wished people to imagine that he intended to commit suicide, than seriously contemplated such an act in his own mind."

This was true—for John Meyrick would have been about the last man in the world to hang himself voluntarily—but it was not the whole truth.

The audience, which had been upon the tiptoe of expectation for some horrible surmise, settled down again, relieved, but disappointed. Mr. Creeps himself, too, looked a little balked.

"I will not prolong an ordeal," said he, "which cannot but be very painful to you, madam, much further; but with respect to this bouquet—you presented it, I believe, to the prisoner at the bar with your own hand?"

"I did, sir."

"You were upon the point of going abroad, madam—were you not—when you received the summons to attend this court as a witness?"

"I was, sir."

Mr. Creeps, with one intelligent glance at the jury, resumed his seat.

Mr. Griffiths rose.

"What was the cause of your being about to leave this country, Mrs. Meyrick?"

"My father's dangerous illness. He was advised to start for the south of France immediately, and he could not do so without me."

"And with respect to this bouquet, of which so much has been made, are we to understand, as my learned friend has left it to be understood, that you presented it to the prisoner at the bar as a gift from you to him?"

"I gave it to him in order that he might take it home, and present it to his wife from me."

Re-examined by Mr. Creeps.—Supposing that such was your intention, madam—that you intended to send these flowers to a lady whom you had only seen once in your life, by the hand of her husband, with whom you were on terms of intimacy—do you not think it possible that the prisoner at the bar might have flattered himself that the bouquet was, in fact, for *him?*"

"No, sir; or if he did—" She paused.

"Well, madam—well," repeated Mr. Creeps, like one upon the very verge of a great discovery.

"If he did," replied Eugenie, calmly, "he must have been mad indeed."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

FOR THE DEFENCE.

THE case for the prosecution being closed, Mr. Griffiths rose and said: "It does not lie in my power, gentlemen of the jury, to rebut the evidence brought forward against my unhappy client, so far, at least, as it relates to the personal encounter between him and the deceased, and it does not lie in my intention. That he is amenable to the present charge does not admit of any argument, nor is it difficult to guess, with almost minute exactness, how the unhappy deed was wrought. My learned friend has very properly told you that it is impossible to lay a charge of wilful murder against the accused. He might have added, that it would be equally impossible to convict him of anything graver than that of justifiable homicide, which, as you are well aware, is no offence at all. The conflict, which resulted so fatally for himself, was evidently thrust by the deceased—maddened with groundless jealousy, and hate, and drink—upon the prisoner at the bar. I say jealousy, because my learned friend has chosen to bring this painful feature of the case before your notice, with the object of prejudicing my unhappy client. My client is as innocent of that social crime which has been hinted at, as of the more serious charge which the prosecution has been compelled to abandon. I deny that any ground of jealousy existed, once for all. I might have disproved it, had it been necessary; and if I had thought that the virtuous and admirable demeanor of the last witness could have been lost upon so intelligent a jury, I would have done so; but I did not do so, because, in my cross-examination of Mrs. Meyrick, I must have elicited many distressing facts concerning her late husband. I did not do so, I repeat, only because I wished, as far as possible, to spare the memory of the dead.

"Why, then, it will be asked, did not the prisoner at the bar, having been thus groundlessly attacked, and having, in self-defence, been compelled to slay his adversary, being conscious of the commission, I do not say, of no crime, but even of no misdemeanor—why, it will be asked, did not the prisoner at the bar at once repair to the nearest police-station—situated in the very direction, too, which it has been proved he did take after the commission of the presumed offence—and describe the occurrence, with all those circumstances, which we have heard from an eye-witness did actually take place—why did he not do this? I will tell you, gentlemen of the jury; it was because he was mad—because he was unaware of what he did, or what he omitted to do. If he was sane, what would happen to him even now—to-day? At the worst a few months', or, more likely, a few days' imprisonment; at the best, and most probably, acquittal as having committed a justifiable homicide. Can you suppose, then, that I should be instructed to defend him from so trifling a peril on such a ground as insanity, which, if allowed, might consign him to a life-long imprisonment, unless my unhappy client were really and truly insane—unaccountable for his actions. Would not the defence proposed be worse in its consequences than the worst punishment which it was designed to elude? Surely, the consideration of this fact might alone convince you that the plea which I have to urge must needs be genuine. I shall bring forward, however, other evidence—the direct testimony of personal friends and relatives, which, of itself, will be amply sufficient to establish that the prisoner at the bar has been long deprived of his reason to such an extent as to render him not answerable to the laws. I shall also bring forward medical evidence of the most unimpeachable kind. Finally, I shall prove the existence of insanity in the prisoner's family. Any one of these arguments would, I conceive, be sufficient to convince you that my unfortunate client is legally irresponsible for the deed laid to his charge, but their cumulative testimony is such, that I cannot imagine a mind so obstinate or so obtuse as to be capable of resisting it.

"It will doubtless be urged by my learned friend, that the eminence which the accused has earned for himself at such an early age in periodical literature, militates strongly against the plea which I have been instructed to urge on his behalf; but I need nôt tell *you* that persons of genius, and especially of literary genius, are most liable to the dread infliction of madness, and, indeed, are seldom capable of taking care of themselves or their own affairs. Nay, it will be seen, that at an early age this very literary faculty of the accused was manifested in a manner which, while it evidenced some talent, gave still stronger indications of a diseased and morbid brain. I beg to call the jury's earnest heed—although I fear the most rapt attention will be thrown away in so far as detecting any meaning in the lines is concerned—to these verses in the prisoner's own handwriting, composed about the age of seventeen, and believed by him even now (poor fellow!) to be pregnant with intelligence and suggestiveness. They are headed '*A Frequent Thought,*' so that it was obvious that the condition of mind was recurrent—habitual, in fact—in which such midsummer madness had been penned

'*When the doors have closed behind us, and the voices died away,*
Do the singers cease their singing, and the children end their play?
Do the words of wisdom well no more through the calm lips of age?
Are the fountains dried whence the young draw hopes too deep for the faith of the sage?
And, like the flower that closes up when the east begins to glow,
Doth the maiden's beauty fade from off her tender cheek and brow?
Are they all but subtle spirits changing into those and these,
To vex us with a feigned sorrow, or to mock us while they please?
All this world a scene phantasmal, shifting aye to something strange,
Such as, if but disenchanted, one might mark in act to change,
See the unembodied beings that we hold of our own kind,
Friend and foe, and kin and lover, each a help to make us blind,

Set to watch our lonely hours, ambushing about our path,
That our eyes may never open till their lids are closed in death;
And when so closed, will these things be as though we had ne'er been born,
And e'en without those tears which are dried swift as the dews by the morn,
That makes us feel these fancies more, so strange doth it appear,
How the memory of a dead man dies with those he held most dear,
As though there was an end, with life, of the mockery that beguiles
Our every act, tricks out our woes, and cheats us of our smiles,
And makes to love, and scorn, and hate, and parts and reconciles.'

"Gentlemen of the jury, we have caused twelve copies of this most extraordinary production to be printed, which will be placed in your hands, lest you may imagine that any latent meaning in the verses may have escaped you through my delivery of them. What would have been your state of mind, I ask, upon finding that any son of your own—of whom, too, you had entertained high hopes—had composed such a piece of writing? Fine pieces of poetry have, before now, been composed by poets absolutely insane, and even in confinement, but when has there been such a piece of poetry as this, composed by a sane mind? I have said that no meaning whatever can be found in it; but I correct myself thus far, and own that there is this much to be gathered from it—the incontestable fact of the insanity of the writer. I will put aside the inexplicable allusions to the singers and the children, the fountains and the flower, and even the totally unexpected reference to the maiden (Good Heavens! *what* maiden?) and confine myself to the mention of the 'subtle spirits,' changing into 'those and these' (these what?) and mocking him—the prisoner at the bar. Why, was not this notion of being haunted by spirits one of the most common forms of mental delusion? As for this world being nothing but a 'scene phantasmal'—— the time, gentlemen of the jury, has arrived when it is customary for the court to take some slight refreshment, and I will not detain you any longer over a subject upon which you are as capable of exercising as sound a judgment as myself. The question, could a sane man write such verses? is not one which requires any technical knowledge of any sort to answer it, but demands a reply in the negative from every person endowed with common sense."

CHAPTER XLIX.

WHAT ONE'S FRIENDS REALLY THINK OF ONE.

AFTER an adjournment of half an hour, the court resumed its sittings, and the following witnesses were called by Mr. Griffiths:

The Rev. Robert Morrit deposed.—The prisoner at the bar is my sister's son. I have had a very intimate acquaintance with him up to within the last two years. He was singular in his habits and behavior; something more than merely eccentric. He was exceedingly clever, but remarkably deficient in judgment. His nature was singularly gentle, kind, and humane: but he was subject to fits of passion. Nothing could control these ebullitions; even when he was quite a child. Although a tolerable scholar, an insatiable reader of books of a certain sort, he took great pleasure, even up to the age of seventeen, in trolling a hoop. He would sometimes amuse himself in that manner for an entire day. The books that he studied for his own pleasure were of an imaginative kind—poetry, romances, and the like. He wrote a great deal of poetry, and much of it was similar to that entitled 'The Frequent Thought,' read in court, (as he understood) that day. He (witness) was well acquainted with English poetry, and he had never read anything at all like his nephew's poetry in any other author. It was not the poetry of a sane man. A relative of the prisoner, one Mr. Thomas Morrit, had gone out of his mind. He was the prisoner's cousin. He was under confinement at the present moment in a lunatic asylum. He (witness) had not been intimate with the prisoner at the bar within the last two years. The intimacy had been intermitted through the unreasonable conduct of the prisoner, and upon no other account. Having been intrusted by the late Dr. Galton with the control of his son's money affairs, he had not thought himself justified in allowing him such an income as he would have allowed him had he behaved in a less eccentric manner. The conduct of the prisoner at the bar had been unreasonable in many respects. He had declined to belong to his father's profession, though greatly urged to do so, and though the circumstances, in case he did, were particularly favorable. He would not attach himself to any profession. He had married beneath him.

Cross-examined by Mr. Creeps.—By the expression married beneath him, he did not mean that he had merely made an ineligible match; it was a match that no man, however young and inexperienced, but being sane, could have been expected to have made. He (witness) had often expressed, before the unhappy circumstances which gave rise to the present trial had occurred, that the prisoner at the bar was mad. He had stated it in so many words. He had also heard others do so.

The next witness was much affected while giving her evidence, and had to be accommodated with a chair.

Ann Hartopp deposed.—Had known Master Freddy—the prisoner at the bar, if she must call him that—ever since he was born. He was always a most lovable child; everybody loved him as came near him. He would never have hurt a fly, even in his worst tantrums; she meant by "tantrums," ungovernable fits of passion; often and often she had laid him down upon the carpet, with a pillow under his darling head, and let him wear hisself out with tantrums; that was, of course, when he was a very little boy. He was always what would be called queer; very queer, indeed. He would run about the house pretending he was a steam-engine, and telling people to shunt themselves out of the way. He used to write a great deal of poetry to her (witness) at one time, and it always made her cry. She did not know that it was pathetic. She had never understood a word of it, and had shown it to lots of people as didn't understand it neither.

Cross-examined by Mr. Creeps.—His running about the house like a steam-engine occurred when he was more than a little boy. Yes, a good deal more. It occurred within a year or so of his being married.

Dr. Hermann, President of Minim Hall, deposed.—The prisoner at the bar resided at Minim Hall as an undergraduate for two terms. He (witness) had had many opportunities of observing his character. It was truly excellent in all respects. His intelligence was very acute, but there were striking flaws in it. He (witness) did not know whether the prisoner at the bar went by the nickname of Mad Galton among his fellow-students or not; he could not be expected to be cognizant of any fact of that nature; but in his own judgment, the young gentleman had certainly merited such an appellation. His manner, when not unnecessarily pronounced and sprightly, was abstracted.

Cross-examined by Mr. Creeps.—He had known great scholars, who were almost as eccentric as the prisoner at the bar, but Mr. Galton was not a great scholar. He did not know that what was but eccentricity in a great scholar would seem, in an undergraduate, to be insanity.

Sir Geoffrey Ackers examined.—Was intimate with the prisoner at the bar during all his college career. It was a very short one, but long enough to have made itself remembered. It was memorable by reason of its eccentricity. His opinions were very peculiar, and such as (in the witness's judgment) could scarcely have been entertained by a sane person in the rank of life of the prisoner at the bar. His political expectations, as expressed in his speeches at the University Debating

Society, were the dreams of a madman; they were not merely what is called visionary. He always went by the name of Mad Galton among his friends. He had on one occasion called at witness's house in London, and lunched with him, and although the girl with whom he was engaged was under the same roof, he had neither spoken of her nor made any effort to see her. He had no hesitation in saying that the prisoner at the bar was, in his (witness's) judgment, of unsound mind.

Cross-examined by Mr. Creeps.—The girl to whom the prisoner at the bar had been engaged was of humble rank. She was not of a rank to sit down to luncheon in the dining-room on the occasion in question—her place was in the housekeeper's room. The prisoner at the bar had distinctly inquired for her of the footman who opened the front door; he could not possibly have forgotten the circumstances, for he had repeated that inquiry. Until he (witness) had been in possession of that fact, he had thought the prisoner's reticence at luncheon had arisen from a wish to conceal his engagement; he was now convinced that it was due to lunacy.

Mr. Percival Potts examined.—Had known the prisoner at the bar both before and after his marriage; ever since, in fact, he had left the university. Had always thought him more than eccentric. Believed him to be the victim of delusions. Especially remembered one instance of delusion which came under his notice on the first occasion of his acquaintance with the accused. They met in Hyde Park late at night, not far from the very spot where the unhappy struggle, which produced the present inquiry, had taken place—and the prisoner at the bar had besought his assistance against certain robbers or murderers, by whom he imagined he had been attacked. There were no robbers or murderers. In the imagination of the prisoner there was also a little child who had done her best to save him from these brigands, and for whom he felt an extravagant gratitude; he left at his lodgings the most elaborate directions respecting the manner in which she should be received in his absence, and expected her, day after day, for a considerable time. No such little child ever called at the prisoner's address, or was likely to call.

Other witnesses, including Mrs. Gideon, and Mr. Jacob Lunes (who gave his own ideas of the quotation from King Lear which he had overheard from under the shepherd's hurdle), were then examined, and gave corroboratory but less important evidence.

Dr. Beebonnet deposed.—I have seen the prisoner several times during his confinement in Newgate, and conversed with him upon various matters, but especially upon the subject of his presumed offence. His behavior was certainly not feigned. I consider him to be decidedly an insane person. He informed me that he did not consider that he had committed any crime in taking the life of Mr. John Meyrick. He was not referring to the circumstance of his having killed him in self-defence. He spoke with great calmness and deliberation. At times, when he could not have been aware that he was under observation, he became much excited, and would conduct himself almost like one in frenzy. His opinions upon all subjects were most extraordinary and abnormal. His ideas upon political matters in particular, he (witness) should designate—if the accused had been a sane man—as those of an incendiary. If his present state of derangement existed upon the 18th of June last it would be likely to lead to the commission of manslaughter. He should describe such a crime, if speaking professionally, as being the consequence of a "homicidal climax." It would be quite possible for an individual so far lunatic, to take precautions against the discovery of such an offence: even a precaution which presumed so much sagacity as that of putting a clock back, with the intention of procuring an alibi.

Here Mr. Griffiths blandly observed: "That will do, Dr. Beebonnet;" but Mr. Creeps bounded up like an india-rubber ball, and requested the learned doctor to remain where he was and answer *him* a question or two.

The great expert put down his hat again—having indeed cherished but small hope of getting away so easily—and regarded his natural enemy with affable contempt.

"You have told us," commenced Mr. Creeps, "that the prisoner at the bar conversed with you upon the subject of this tragical crime, with calmness and deliberation. Are we to understand, Dr. Beebonnet, that you consider such behavior to be any proof of his having a diseased intellect?"

"I consider such behavior to be a strong, though not convincing, sign of insanity."

"Very good, sir; and when you detected him unawares conducting himself with almost frenzy—that is to say, acting in a diametrically opposite manner, did you take that to be a strong sign of his insanity?"

"I took that to be a convincing sign," responded the doctor, calmly.

"I think, doctor," observed Mr. Creeps, smiling, "that it would be extremely difficult for any one of us to persuade you by any course of conduct that we could possibly adopt under your official investigation that *we* were sane. Perhaps, however, you will kindly inform us what you mean by a homicidal climax?"

"I believe," observed Dr. Beebonnet, with deliberation, "that the prisoner at the bar has been laboring under homicidal mania for a considerable time—it may be ever since the period of life at which the disease is generally induced—and that an uncontrollable homicidal impulse took possession of him upon the fatal occasion in question."

"That is to say," observed Mr. Creeps, "exactly at the moment when he happened to be uppermost in the struggle between himself and his victim, and held his life in his hands."

"Precisely so," returned Dr. Beebonnet.

"You have told us that the act of putting a clock back after the commission of a crime, as evidenced in the present case by the prisoner's landlady, in order to evade suspicion, or to ground an alibi, is by no means inconsistent with a mind incapable of logical conclusion. Now, if the prisoner at the bar had *not* put the clock back—if he had taken no means whatever to conceal his offence, would you not consider such neglect to be a strong evidence of his being insane?"

"It would be a strong, but not a convincing, proof of insanity," replied the unabashed expert.

"In point of fact," observed Mr. Creeps, severely, "just as a dilettante in a picture-gallery will have it that he alone understands what is beautiful, and that the eyes which nature has given other people can see nothing rightly unless they borrow his spectacles, so do you learned doctors assume to yourselves the monopoly of deciding on the sanity or otherwise of this or that individual, although to the rest of his fellow-creatures he may always have shown himself as wise and capable, at least, as you yourselves."

"I thank you, sir," returned the doctor, urbanely, "for having stated our case so fairly. Having given up our lives, like the connoisseurs of the fine arts of whom you speak, to one particular pursuit, we do assume to know something more about it than the great mass of mankind; and [here he began to italicise] especially than those persons whose self-interest, often in antagonism to their judgment, alone induces them to form any opinion upon the subject whatever."

Dr. Crotchet examined and deposed. Had had interviews with the prisoner at the bar in conjunction with the last witness, but had formed his own opinion. His idea had certainly at first been that the accused was feigning madness, or at least was more than willing to be considered as of unsound mind. He (witness) had now abandoned that theory; he flattered himself it was not easy to make him abandon any theory except upon strong grounds. Those grounds had, in his judgment, been given, on the result of a certain ordeal which the prisoner had unconsciously undergone, with the view of testing the genuineness of his malady. He (witness) had no longer any doubt respecting the insanity of the prisoner.

Cross-examined by Mr. Creeps.—There was a most important difference between insanity and unsoundness of mind; it would take much time to explain the distinction, but there were seven volumes extant upon that subject, written by witness himself, which might be said to have exhausted it. He did not say that Mr. Creeps could not do better than purchase them, but he might unquestionably do a great deal worse; he would not say if Mr. Creeps declined to purchase them that it would be a convincing proof of his unsoundness of mind; he would decline to swear that it was not a strong proof. He did not always agree with Dr. Beebonnet upon these species of cases; he did not agree with him upon the present case. He thought the theory of homicidal climax was a sheer absurdity. He believed that the prisoner had committed the crime imputed to him in a fit of insanity; but it was not through a homicidal climax. It was through a sudden "suspension of the will." He (witness) would be very happy to deliver his views upon the suspension of the will, but he warned the court that the subject was an abstruse one.

Mr. Creeps declined to trouble him, observing, facetiously, that if the theory of suspension of the will was to be accepted in all cases of capital crime, the theory of suspension of the body might as well disappear from our penal enactments.

After sitting down for a moment or two, to permit his countenance to lose the elation consequent upon this *jeu d' esprit*, Mr. Creeps arose, and replied on the part of the prosecution. He went through all the evidence for the defence, with abundant comments upon its weakness and futility; contending that the testimony of the prisoner's personal friends had been colored by a natural wish to preserve him from the shameful position of a felon, and intimating that their very plea of insanity—the original idea, perhaps, of some sagacious attorney—had suggested to them, for the first time in their lives, that Mr. Frederick Galton was not as sane as any one of them. He reviewed the medical evidence with especial severity; and with respect to "The Frequent Thought," he begged to observe that he held in his hand a copy of a published work of the prisoner at the bar, which contained, besides poems of great beauty, others quite as ridiculous and unmeaning, as the verses in question. It was not unusual for a poetical writer to write obscurely. His learned friend had laid a great stress upon this matter, taking it for granted, perhaps, that all the gentlemen of the jury were not entirely conversant with modern works of the imagination, but he would beg to read them some extracts from a very famous poem, called "Sordello," and from another entitled "Balder," which he did not hesitate to say would be found quite as inexplicable—

Here the learned judge interposed with some alacrity, observing that such a course could not be adopted; inasmuch as the case before the court could not be affected by the sanity or insanity of the authors in question.

Whereupon Mr. Creeps wound up his observations with an appeal to the native intelligence of those twelve gentlemen whom it had been his great privilege to address upon the present important occasion, more especially directing their attention to the standard of plain common sense which they were there to uphold, and to the well-being of society of which they had been appointed body-guard. The judge then addressed the same unhappy persons, and summed up the whole case unfavorably (as the bar considered) for the prisoner's plea.

The twelve retired to consider their verdict, and remained for hours in their mysterious seclusion. Other cases were brought on before another twelve, in the conduct of which Mr. Creeps exhibited the same virtuous indignation, when employed for the prosecution, as before; but when engaged for the defence, a tender sympathy with menaced innocence. The judge, too, performed his duties as though they were as important as that which he had already executed. But the audience at large waited impatiently to learn the event of the first trial. Lights were brought into the dingy court-house; but still they waited, with their looks nailed to the door whereby the men must enter for whose grave decision they had so long tarried. The witnesses for the defence remained in a room apart, and with them Mrs. Galton and her sister. Mr. Griffiths, who was vastly interested in the case, came in and out every quarter of an hour, though he had no news. He declined to give any opinion upon what the verdict would be, but it was evident that he feared the effect of the judge's charge. At last he came in, rubbing his hands, which only occurred with him at a certain considerable height in his spirit-level. The jury had sent out for a copy of "The Frequent Thought," which by some accident had not been supplied to them; there was a certain carcass-butcher among them, whom Mr. Griffiths felt confident of, if he did but read that poem for himself. In ten minutes from that time the usherer came to call them. The jury had returned to court, and were about to deliver their verdict. The carcass-butcher looked radiant and very red. He had been opposed by somebody with considerable obstinacy, but now, at least, he was triumphant.

"We find Frederick Galton Not Guilty, my lord," said the foreman, in answer to the usual question, "upon the ground of insanity."

"Those verses did the trick," observed Mr. Griffiths confidentially to his friend Mr. Clene Hans.

The muscles of the attorney's right eye quivered for a moment, but he made no audible reply.

"Heaven be praised!" exclaimed the curate, devoutly.

"All that now remains must be left to Pup—pup—

pup," remarked Mr. Jonathan Johnson, who had watched the whole proceedings with intense interest.

"Yes, to Providence; we can do no more, I suppose," sighed the curate.

"Must be left to Pup—pup—pup—Potts," continued Mr. Johnson, as though nobody had made any intervening observation. "He is well in with the ministry, and has asked for nothing for this six weeks on pup—pup—purpose to make himself heard by the Home Secretary."

"During her Majesty's pleasure," murmured Mary, repeating the last words of the judge, like a child who, having mastered its first lesson, begins to commit its second to memory. "Can I see him to-day, uncle Robert?"

Mr. Morrit, who had not the heart to say "No," looked hesitatingly towards Mr. Griffiths.

"My dear madam," said the barrister with feeling, "I think it would be better to make no such application just now. I make no doubt that constant opportunities of interview will soon be afforded to you; and I entertain a firm hope that at no great distance of time your husband will be restored to you by the Crown."

L.

REST AND BE THANKFUL.

MR. GRIFFITHS was not a man to hold out false hopes; and his prophecy was not long in fulfilment. His opinion respecting the advantage of social position was not perhaps so decided as that of Mr. Sydney Smith, who has informed us that the British law is open to rich and poor alike—*like the London Tavern;* but he was well aware that station had its privileges in matters of this particular nature. Nor is this fact so unjust as it appears to be. That the superior classes suffer under accusation fiftyfold more than those who are content to call them their "betters," is only right and proper; the chances are that they deserve it fiftyfold, and therefore their punishment should be in nowise decreased. But what would be the use of giving up a pauper criminal lunatic to his friends, even if they were ever so desirous to have him—of which there is no recorded instance? Upon the other hand, what could her Gracious Majesty do better than intrust Frederick Galton to the custody of his wife and other relatives, about to reside with him in a secluded valley of Switzerland, removed from what Dr. Crotchet terms (in his admirable treatise upon "suspension of the will") "all exciting causes," and far from those familiar scenes which were so likely, "through association with the past, to superinduce [in the very words of Dr. Beebonnet] a homicidal climax." Still, there was some necessity for patience. The *Daily Democrat* had concluded its fiery leader upon the gross miscarriage of justice during the late trial, with a warning to the Home Secretary that its vigilant eye was fixed upon him, and would watch his future conduct in this case with a jealous but unhappily only too well-founded suspicion. Many dreary months dragged their slow length along before Frederick Galton was once more a free man, and even then under conditions.

The *Daily Democrat* need not have been so indignant, for his punishment had been at least as severe as he deserved. I do not say as his crime deserved, for he had absolutely committed none whatever. Providence sometimes uses mortal statute-books for the chastisement of offences against which mortals have enacted no law; but there is no miscarriage of justice in the courts of Heaven. Nobody is more aware of this fact than the culprit himself, notwithstanding that to others he may seem a victim! To many, and especially to those who knew him best, Frederick Galton did appear, even when he had obtained his much-grudged liberty, a hardly used and very ill-starred man. Not a few of them regretted that the plea upon which he had escaped the slur of crime had been used at all. He might very probably have escaped without that plea, which, whether genuine or assumed, must equally be his ruin. How bitter it seemed that one so young, and yet who had given such high promise of honorable fame, should have thus wrecked himself! Even a premature death would have been preferable to this—as absolute an extinction of his career, but one which did not leave his reputation unsullied. Frederick himself was fortunately not of this opinion. True, he was young, but he had already had enough of a number of things, of which a continuance of the life he had hitherto led could only give him more. It did not wound him in the least to think that he should never play the part of a London *succès* again. He had recently had an opportunity of estimating pretty accurately how little that sort of popularity was worth; and also of discovering how beyond all price is the affection of a few true hearts. How could he ever have fathomed the love of Mary, his wife, save by this far-reaching plummet of adversity; and what rarest proofs of devotion had it brought up—as that which clings to the lead shows the nature of the anchorage—from the clear depths of her soul.

No smile had flickered on her lips—nay, not a tear (although she had prayed for tears) had bedewed her eyes, from the hour that he was put in hold, to that in which she clasped him imprisoned in her loving arms, but a free man once more. Then she smiled, then she wept, as one who has reaped reward far greater than her meed. And yet she had toiled, too: toiled, nay, she had slept only that she might toil for him the more.

In the beautiful valley of the Vorder Rhine, and not very far from that spot, short of Disentis, where the indifferent char-road ceases altogether, there has arisen a small but comfortable English mansion. Thither (at the time I write of) few travellers had begun to penetrate, and the inns in the neighboring villages were described even in the mellifluous Murray as "rough" or "of ill repute;" while even now the place is one of the most secluded in Switzerland. Still, not only when the laughing Rhine leaps down from the sunny pastures of the Oberalp, to seek the clustering cherry-trees of Somvix, or the shadow of the woods of Trûns, but when it rages, swollen by the snows of winter, that English home has not only its wonted tenants, but even its visitors. Its tenants are not a few. Besides the master of the house, and his still lovely wife, and their boy, about whose educational future domestic councils have already begun to be held, there are Mrs. Perling and her daughter Jane. Never did man and his mother-in-law dwell so peaceably together as do Frederick and the widow; she would as soon think of interfering in the affairs of his household, as of dictating the policy of the Swiss Confederation; while it is impossible that she can ever vex him in that happy valley by travelling in a third-class carriage, even though a railway should be projected in the locality by a board of Directors sitting at Colney Hatch. Whatever she does is right in the eyes of the neighbors, and it is even said—her daughter, Mrs. Galton, being held to be a sort of princess, whose attire it would be idle to emulate—that Mrs. Perling sets the fashions to the majority of the Romansch (female) population. She had never acquired their dialect, nor is it probable that she ever will do so, but she speaks (and acts) the common language of charity and benevolence, and everybody understands her very well. She does not regret Oldborough, for it was only because it held her dear ones that she loved it, and now they are both with her under the same roof. The homely life, the quiet scenes, are very pleasing to her; and the only alloy of her happy life is avalanches. These alarming occurrences she considers preventable, and no such things, she is firmly convinced, would ever have been permitted in England—no matter in what geological era.

Sister Jane imagines herself to be in an earthly Paradise. All her dreams of natural beauty are realized in stream and forest, in upland and ravine. She lives out of doors, whenever, that is, her presence is not needed within them, for her chiefest pleasure is still, as always, to make herself useful to other people. Next to his mother, Master Frederick Galton—the *second!* Ah me! the years, the years they glide away!—next to his mother, I say, the boy loves aunt Jenny, although he is dearly fond of papa too. Fond, too, he is of uncle Robert, although that gentleman often leads him to the fountains of Greek literature, when he would much rather seek the Rhine stream with his fishing-rod; nay, more, although he urgently recommends that, when the proper time arrives, the youth shall be sent to one of the English universities—if not to Camford, then (at least) to Oxbridge. It was impossible that the curate should reside any longer at Casterton—not a stone's throw from the Grange. He visits England occasionally, but his home is with his nephew and niece. It is very pleasant to see him strolling slowly with her up the gorge towards the Oberalp on any summer afternoon; he insists upon it, every hundred yards or so, that they have now arrived at one of the points where the view is to be admired, and pauses to survey it at leisure. The fact is, he is out of breath, for reasons. He says that the Romansch bread is very nasty (in which opinion I agree with him), and finds the staff of life in boxes of biscuits from Messrs. Huntley and Palmer; but the fact is, the curate is "Banting." It is impossible to mistake that well-preserved comfortable-looking British divine for one of those ecclesiastics in the Disentis Monastery, with whom, however, he is on the best of terms. He has not much in common with them, and especially (he thanks Heaven) not his meals; but he has got to understand their barbarous Latin at last, which Dr. Hermann, travelling (*en garçón*) last year in that locality, was quite unable to do. Mr. Morrit has no twenty-port left to give them, but they immensely appreciate Minim Hall audit ale. They believe Mrs. Galton to be altogether too good and beautiful to be suffered to die a heretic; but although she has once or twice attended their somewhat tawdry little valley churches, she has only been heard to express herself with enthusiasm in favor of their monastery bell, the tone of which is certainly admirable.

Every year she makes a pilgrimage to another religious house, at Florac, in Lozere, and stays a week with Eugenie de Lernay, who has resumed her maiden name. No male was ever admitted among the sisterhood save once, when Master Frederick accompanied his mother by special invitation, and was received with rapture; stay; I am wrong; another exception was made long ago for Eugenie's sake. M. de Lernay was laid by the side of his dead daughter and the faithful Kathleen, in the God's acre of the convent. There she hopes to be laid herself in God's good time, but not earlier. The widow of John Meyrick must needs be happy by comparison with his wife, but Eugenie is happy in the positive degree. The scenes about her remind her of the dead whom she has loved most in this world; and of those who are yet alive and dear to her she hears good tidings brought by a faithful messenger. She rarely weeps unless when Mary departs after her periodical visit. Then her heart follows her upon the road, and she pictures her return to husband, and child, and home; and perhaps the involuntary painter sheds a bitter tear or two, because such things have been denied to herself. Still, although we cannot honestly end our story, like some more fortunate chroniclers, with the assurance, that all our favorites "lived very happy afterwards," yet they have little to complain of, while the remembrance of what they have endured and escaped from makes their contentment the greater.

Casual tourists who enjoy Frederick Galton's hospitality in the summer-time, express their wonder that such a radiant talker and keen thinker can consent to dwell in the wilderness; but their remark is at least an evidence that he has not lost his high spirits. His lot is surely as enviable as that of the most popular "diner-out," who at the end of his butterfly existence publishes his "Reminiscences of Men and Things." He roams over the Rhœtian Alps with a step almost as buoyant as that with which he used to tread the breezy Downs at home long, long ago—the Downs that retain no vestige of him nor his, save a little white cross, with W. G. upon it, on the spot where his father's uneventful days were hurried to their close, and a simple grave in Casterton churchyard, kept green and flowering by hands that stretch across the sea. I can myself witness to his being a genial host and a mighty climber of the mountain-tops; neither will it be a breach of confidence to say that the *Porcupine* has by no means lost its most brilliant contributor.

It was in company with the editor-in-chief of that periodical, and of his friend Mr. Percival Potts—very frequent visitors to the valley of the Vorder Rhine at all seasons—that I last saw Frederick Galton. We had been his guests, and he and his wife accompanied us far upon our way as we climbed the gorge that leads to Andermatt. They did not part from us till we had reached the high pasture-lands, and, for my part, I felt very sad to have to say good-by. Never had I met a host so agreeable, nor a hostess altogether so charming. How I envied them, as they turned and took their way back to their happy valley, arm linked in arm! As for us we were bound for London and the great world, where no such sights are to be seen.

"I tell you what, Pup—pup—pup—Potts," observed Mr. Jonathan Johnson, looking after them, and returning the last flutter of Mrs. Galton's handkerchief with his own.

"Well, what?" returned Potts, who was waving his hat, in melancholy reply to the white signal.

"I tell you what, Pup—pup—pup—Potts, depend upon it that, after all, our friend Galton never mur—mur—mur—"

"Never murdered anybody!" interrupted Potts, testily—"of course, he didn't."

"Depend upon it," repeated Mr. Jonathan Johnson persistently, "that our friend Galton never mur—mur—'Married beneath him,' after all."

"Married beneath him!" echoed Potts, indignantly:

"*That woman's a princess, if ever there was one.*"

THE END.

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